KARMA-YOGA

A COURSE OF EIGHT LECTURES DELIVERED AT NEW YORK.

BY

The. Swami Vivekananda.



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"উত্তিষ্ঠত জাগ্রত প্রাপ্য বরান্নিবোধত।"

—কঠোপনিষৎ, ১।৩।১৪।

Arise, awake, and get to teachers : know first who thau art.

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The Ramkrishna-Mission,
Calcutta.
30th June, 1901.

SWAMI TRIGUNATITA.



KARMA-YOGA.

CHAPTER I.

Karma in its effect on character.

THE word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit "Kri" to do; everything that is done is *Karma*. Technically, this word also means the effects of actions. In connection with metaphysics it sometimes means the effects of which our past actions are the causes. But in Karma-Yoga we have simply to do with the word "Karma" as meaning work. The goal for all mankind to aim at is know-ledge of truth; that is the one ideal placed before us by Eastern philosophy. Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Pleasure and happiness come to an end. It is a mistake of man to suppose that pleasure

is the goal; the cause of all the miseries we have in the world is that men foolishly think pleasure to be the ideal thing to strive for. After a time man finds that it is not happiness, but knowledge, towards which he is going, and that both pleasure and pain are great teachers, and that he learns to know the truth as well from good as from evil. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called man's "character". If you take the character of any man it realy is but the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind; you will find that misery and happiness are equal factors in the formation of that character; good and evil have an equal share in moulding character, and in some instances misery is greater teacher than happiness. In studying the great characters that the world has produced it may be seen that, in the vast majority of cases, it was misery that taught them more than happiness, it was poverty that taught them more than wealth; blows brought out their inner fire, more than praise.*

Now this knowledge, again, is inherent

in a man; no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. What we say a man "knows," in strict psychological language, should be what a man "discovers" or "unveils"; what a man "learns" is really what he "discovers by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge. We say Newton discovered gravitation. Was it sitting any-where in a corner waiting for him? It was in his own mind; the time came and he found it out. All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is simply the suggestion, the occasion, which sets you to study your own mind, but the object of your study is always your own mind. The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton, and he studied his own mind; he rearranged all the previous links of thought in his mind and discovered a new link among them, which we call the law of gravitation. It was not in the apple nor in anything in the center of the earth. So, all knowledge, secular or spiritual is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered; and when the covering is being slowly taken off

we say "we are learning," and all advance of knowledge is produced by the advance of this process of discovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the knowing man; the man upon whom it lies thick is ignorant, and the man from whom it has entirely gone is all-knowing, omniscient. There have been omniscient men, and I believe will be yet; there will be myriads of them in the cycles to come. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge is existing in the mind; the suggestion is the friction that brings out that fire. So with all our feelings and actions —our tears and our smiles, our joys and our griefs, our weeping and our laughter, our curses and our blessings, our praises and blames—every one of these we may find if we calmly study our own selves, to have been brought out from within ourselves by so many blows dealt. The result is what we are; all these blows taken together are called "*Karma*" work, action. Every mental physical blow that is given to the soul to make it strike fire, discover its own power and knowledge, is *Karma*, this word being used in its widest sense; So we are all performing *Karma* all the time in our lives,

I am talking to you; that is *Karma*. You are listening; that is *Karma*. We breathe that is *Karma*, We walk; *Karma* We talk; *Karma*. Everything we do, physical or mental is *Karma*, and it is steadily leaving its marks on us.

There are certain works which are, as it were, aggregate, the sum total, of a large number of smaller works. If we stand near the seashore and hear the waves dashing against the shingle we think it is such a great noise, and yet we know that one big wave is really composed of millions and milliions of minute waves; each one of these is making a noise, and yet we do not catch its sound it is only when they become the big aggrgate that we catch the loud sound. So every pulsation of the heart is contributing to the grand total of work; certain kinds of work we feel and they become tangible to us; they are at the same time, the aggregate of a number of small works. If you really want to judge of the character of a man look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man doing his most common action; these are indeed the things which will tell you the

real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is the really great man whose character is great always, the same wherever he be.

Karma in its effect on character is the most tremendous power that man has to deal with. Man is as it were, a centre, and he is attracting all the powers of the universe towords himself, and in this center he is fusing them all and ejecting them again in a big current. Such a centre is the *real* man, the almighty, the omniscient, and he draws the whole universe towards him ; good and bad, misery and happiness, all are running towards him, and clinging round him ; and out of them he fashions the mighty stream of tendency called character and throws it outwards. As he has the power of drawing in anything, he has also the power of throwing it out to act and fructify.

Now, all the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, or cities, or ships, or men-of-war,

everything is simply the manifestation of the will of man ; and this will is caused by character aud character is manufactured by *Karma.* As is *Karma,* so is the the manifestation of the will. The many men of mighty will whom the world has produced have all been tremendous workers—huge, gigantic men, with wide wills, powerful enough to overturn worlds ; and they got that kind of will by persistent work, through ages and ages. Such a gigantic will as that of a Buddha or a Jesus cannot be got as the result of works in one life, for we know who their fathers were. It is not known that their fathers ever spoke a word for the good of mankind. Millions and millions of carpenters like Joseph have gone ; millions are still living. Millions and millions of petty kings like Buddha's father have been in the world. If it is only a case of hereditary transmission, how do you account for this little pretty prince, who was not, perhaps, obeyed by his own servants, producing this son, whom half a world worships ? How do you account for this gap between the carpenter and his son, whom millions of human beings worship as God ? It cannot

be accounted for by that theory of heredity. This gigantic will which Buddha threw over the world, which rose out of Jesus, whence did it come? Whence came this accumulation of power? It must have been there through ages and ages, continually growing bigger and bigger, until it burst on a society in a Buddha or a Jesus; and its influence has gone on rolling down even to the present day.

and all this is determined by *Karma*, work. No one can get anything unless he earns it; this is an eternal law; we may sometimes think it is not so, but in the long run we become perforce convinced that it is so. A man may struggle all his life to become rich; he may cheat thousands, but he finds at last that he did not deserve to become rich and his life becomes a trouble and a nuisance to him. We may go on accumulating things for our physical enjoyment, but only what we really earn is ours. A fool may buy all the books in the world, and they will be in his library; but he will be able to read only those that he deserves to read; and this deserving is produced by *Karma*. Our *Karma* determines what we

deserve and what we can assimilate. We are responsible for what we are and whatever we wish ourselves to become that we have the power to make of ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act. You will say, "What is the use of learning how to work? Every one works in some way or other in this world." But there is such a thing as frittering away our energies. With regard to this Kaama-Yoga, it is said in the *Gîtà* that it is doing work with cleverness and as a science: knowing how to do work—that will bring the great results. You must remember that all work is simply intended to bring out the power of the mind which is already there, to wake up the soul. the power is inside every man, and the knowledge is there; these different works are like blows to bring it out, to cause this giant to wake up.

Man works with various motives; there cannot be work without motive. Some people want to get fame, and they work for fame. Others want to get money, and they work

for money. Others want to have power, and they work for power. Others want to get to heaven, and they work to get to heaven. Others want to leave a name when they die, as they do in China, where no man gets a title until he is dead; and that is a better way, after all, than with us. When a man does something very good there, they give a title of nobility to his *father*, who is dead, or to his grandfather. Some people work for that. Some of the followers of certain Mohammedan sects work all their lives to have a big tomb built for them when they die. I know sects among whom as soon as child is born, the men begin to prepare for tomb; that is among them the most important a man has to do, and the bigger and the finer the tomb the better off is the man supposed to be. Others do good work as a penance; they do all sorts of wicked things, then erect a temple, or give something to the priests to buy them off and obtain from them a passport to heaven. They think that this kind of beneficence will clear them and that they will go scot-free in spite of their sinfulness. Such are some of the various motives for work.

Work for work's sake. There are some who are really the salt of the earth in every country and who work for work's sake, who do not care for name, or fame, or even to get to heaven. They work just because good will come of it. There are others who do good to the poor and help mankind from sitll higher motives, because they believe it is good to do good and they love whatever is good. Now, to return to this matter of motives, those of name and fame. These motives seldom bring immediate result ; name and fame, as a rule, come to us when we are old and have almost done with life. If I, all my life, work for fame, I generally find I get a little in the long run ; if I work for name, struggle all my life for it, I find in the end that I get a little name ; similarly if I want anything material I get it in the long run, and there it stops. But if a man works without any selfish motive in view what becomes of him ? Does he not gain anything ? Yes, he becomes the highest gainer. Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practise it. It is more paying in physical value also. Love, and truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of

of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power. In the first place, a man who can work for five days, or even for five minutes, without any selfish motive whatever without thinking of future, of heaven, of punishment, or anything of the kind, has in him the capacity to become a powerful moral giant. It is hard to do it, but in the heart of our hearts we know the value of it, and what good it brings. It is the greatest manifestation of power—this tremendous restraint ; selfrestraint is a higher manifestation of power than all outgoing action. A carriage with four horses may rush down a hill without restraint ; or the coachman may restrain the horses. Which is the greater manifestation of power, to let them go or to restrain them ? A ball flying through the air goes a long distance and then falls. Another is cut short in its flight by striking against a wall, and intense heat is generated. So, all this outgoing follows a selfish motive and disappears sooner or later ; it will not cause power to return to you, but if the self is restrained the power will develop. Restraint of this kind will tend to produce a mighty will, that kind

of character which makes a Christ or a Buddha. Foolish men do not know this secret; they nevertheless want to rule mankind. The fool does not know that even he may rule the whole world if he works and waits. Wait a few years, restrain the foolish idea of governing; and when that idea is wholly gone, your will restrain the universe. Men run after a few dollars and do not think anything of cheating a fellow-being to get those dollars; but if they would restrain themselves, in a few years they would develop such characters as would bring them millions of dollars if they wanted them. But we are all such fools! The majority of us cannot see beyond a few years, just as some animals cannot see beyond a few steps. Just a little narrow circle; that is our world. We have not the patience to look beyond it, and we thus become immoral and wicked. This is our weakness, our powerlessness.

Even the lowest forms of work are not to be despised. Let the man, who knows no better, work for selfish ends, for name and fame; but everyone has always to try to get towards higher and higher motives and to understand what such motives are. "To

work we have the right, but not to the fruits thereof." Leave the fruits alone, leave results alone. Who care for results? When you wish to help a man, never think about what the man's attitude should be towards you. Do not care to understand or to appreciate results. If you want to do a great or a good work, do not trouble yourself about what the results will be.

There arises a difficult question for consideration in relation to this ideal of work. Intense activity is necessary; we must always work. We cannot live a minute without work. What then becomes of ideal rest? Here is one picture of life-struggle, work; in it we are whirled rapidly round in the current of social life. And here is another picture—that of calm, retiring renunciation; everything is peaceful around you, there is very little of noise and show, and all is only nature, animals and flowers and mountains. Neither of these is in itself a perfect picture. If an unfit man tries to live up to the ideal of renunciation, as soon as he is brought in contact with the surging whirlpool of the world he will be crushed by it; just as the fish, that lives in the deep sea, as soon as it

comes to the surface, breaks into pieces; the weight of water on it had kept it together. So these men, who are always living in retirement and never attempt work, as soon as they are brought in contact with the world, break into pieces. Can a man who has been used to the turmoil and the rush of life live at all if he comes into a quiet place? The only place he thence goes to, if alive, is the lunatic asylum. The ideal man is he who, in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity, find the silence and solitude of the desert. He has learned the secret of restraint; he has controlled himself. He goes through the streets of a big city with all their traffic, and his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave, where not a sound could reach him; and he is intensely working all the time. That is the ideal of *Karma-Yoga*, and if you have attained to that you have really learned the secret of work.

But we have to begin from the beginning, to take up the various kinds of work as they come to us and slowly make ourselves more and more unselfish every day. We must do

the work that has fallen to our lot and find out the motive power that is behind it, prompting us to do the work; and, almost without exception, in the first years, we shall find that our motives are always selfish; but gradually this selfishness will melt away by our persistence, and at last there will come the time when we shall be able to do really unselfish work, at least now and then. Then we all may hope that some day or other, as we roll down the river of life, will come to us the time when we shall become perfectly unselfish; and the moment we become that, all our powers will get concentrated, and the knowledge of truth which will then be ours will become at once quite manifest.

CHAPTER II.

"Each is great in his own place."

According to the *Sânkhya* philosophy, there are in nature three kinds of forces, called, in Sanskrit, *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. These as manifested in the physical world are what we may call attraction, repulsion, and the control of the two. *Sattva*

is what exercises the control, *Rajas* is the repulsion, while *Tamas* is the attraction. *Tamas* is typified as darkness or inactivity; *Rajas* as activity, where each particle is trying to fly off from the attracting centre; and *Sattva* is the equilibrium of the two, giving a due balancing of both.

Now in every man there are those three forces; in each of us we find that sometimes the *Tamas* prevails; we become lazy; we cannot move; we are inactive, bound down by certain ideas or by mere dulness. At other times activity will prevail in us, and still other times that calm balancing of both will prevail—the *Sattva*. Again, in different men, a different one of these forces is generally predominant. The chracteristic of one man is inactivity, dulness and laziness; the characteristic of another man is activity, power, manifestation of energy; and in still another man we find the sweetness, calmness, which are due to the balancing of both action and inaction. So in all creation—in animals, in plants and in men—we find the more or less typical manifestation of all these different tendencies or forces.

Karma-Yoga has specially to deal with

these three elements or tendencies of nature. By teaching us what they are and how we are to employ them it helps us to do our work in life the better. Human society is a graded organization. It is an organism in which there are different grades and states. We all know about morality, and we all know about duty, but at the same time we find that in various countries the significance of morality differs greatly. What is regarded as moral in one country, in another may be perfectly immoral. For instance, in one country cousins may marry; in another it is thought to be very immoral to do so; in one, men may marry their sisters-in-law; in another, it is regarded as immoral; in one country people may marry only once; in another, many times; and so forth. Similarly in all other departments of morality we find that the standard varies greatly; yet we have the idea that there must be a universal standard of morality.

So it is with duty. The idea of duty varies much among different nation: in one country, if a man does *not* do certain things, people will say he has acted wrongly; and if he does those very things in another

country, people will still say that he did not act rightly ; and yet we konw that there must be some universal idea of duty. In the same way, one class of society thinks that certain things are among its duty, and another class thinks quite the opposite and would be horrified if it had to do those things. Two ways are left open to us—either the way of the ignorant, who think that there is only one way to truth, and that all the rest are wrong ;—or the way of the wise, who admit that, according to our mental constitution or the different plane of existence in which we are, duty and morality may vary. Thus the important thing is to know that there are gradations of duty and of morality—that what is the duty of one state of life, in one set of circumstances, will not and cannot be that of another.

The following example will serve to illustrate this position :—All great teachers have taught "Resist not evil"—have taught that the non-resisting of evil is the highest moral ideal. We all know that, if every one of us living in the country attempted to put that maxim fully into practice, the whole social fabric would fall to pieces, society

would be destroyed, the violent and the wicked would take possession of our properties and our lives, and would do whatever they liked with us. Even if only one day of such non-resistance were practised it would lead to the utter dissolution of society. Yet, intuitively, in our heart of hearts we feel the truth of the teaching, "Resist not evil." This seems to us to be the highest ideal to aim at; yet to teach this doctrine only would be equivalent to condemning a vast proportion of mankind. Not only so, it would be making men feel that they were always doing wrong, cause in them scruples of conscience in regard to all their actions; it would weaken them, and that kind of constant self-disapproval would breed more vice than any other weakness. To the man who has begun to hate himself, the gate to degeneration has already become open, and this is true of nations as well.

Our first duty is not to hate ourselves; because to advance onwards we must have faith in ourselves first and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God. Therefore, the only alternative remaining to us is to recognize that duty and

morality vary under different circumstances; not that the man who resists evil is doing what is always and in itself wrong, but that in the different circumstances in which he is placed, it may become even his duty to resist evil.

Some of you have read, perhaps, the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, and many of you in Western countries may have felt astonished at the first chapter, wherein our Sri Krishna calls Arjuna a hypocrite and a coward because of his refusal to fight, or offer resistance, as his adversaries were his friends and relatives,—his refusal on the plea that non-resistance was the highest ideal of love. This is a great lesson for us all to learn, that in all matters the two extremes are alike; the extreme positive and the extreme negative are always similar: when the vibrations of light are too slow we do not see them, nor do we see them when they are too rapid. So with sound; when very low in pitch we do not hear it, when very high we do not hear it either. of like nature is the difference between resistance and non-resistance One man does not resist because he is weak, lazy, and cannot, not because he will not;

the other man knows that he can strike an irresistible blow if he likes; yet he not only does not strike, but blesses his enemies. The one who resists not from weakness commits a sin, and as such he can not receive any benefit from his non-resistance; while the other would commit a sin by offering resistance. Budha gave up his throne and renounced his position; that was true renunciation; but there cannot be any question of renunciation in the case of a beggar who has nothing to renounce. So we must always be careful about what we really mean when we speak of this non-resistance and ideal love. We must first take care to understand whether we have the power of resistance or not. Then, having the power, if we renounce it and do not resist, we are doing a grand act of love; but if we cannot resist, and yet, at the same time, try to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are actuated by motives of the highest love, we are doing the exact opposite. So Arjuna became a coward at the sight of the mighty array against him; his "love" made him forget his duty towards his country and king. That is why Sri Krishna told him that he was a hypocrite:—"Thou talkest

like a wise man, but thy actions betray thee to be a coward; therefore, stand up and fight!"

Such is the central idea of *Karma-Yoga*. The *Karma-Yogin* is the man who understands that the highest ideal is non-resistance, and who also knows that this non-resistance is the highest manifestation of power in actual possession, and that what is called the resisting of evil is but a step on the way towards the manifestation of this highest power, namely, non-resistance. Before reaching fittingly this highest ideal, man's duty is to resist evil; let him work, let him fight, let him strike straight from the shoulder. Then only, when he has gained the power to resist, will non resistance be a virtue.

I once met a man in my country whom I had known before as a very stupid, dull person who knew nothing and had not the desire to know anything, and was living the life of a brute. He asked me what he should do to know God, how he was to get free. "Can you tell a lie?" I asked him. "No," he replied. "Then you must learn to do so. It is better to tell a lie than to be a brute, or

a log of wood; you are inactive; you are not certainly of the highest state, which is beyond all actions, calm and serene; you are too dull even to do something wicked.' That was an extreme case, of course, and I was in joke with him; but what I meant was, that a man must be active, in order to pass through activity to perfect calmness.

Inactivity should be avoided by all means. Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical; and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will calmness come. It is very easy to say, "Hate not anybody, resist not any evil," but we know what that kind of thing generally means in practice. When the eyes of society are turned towards us we may make a show of non-resistance, but in our hearts it is canker all the time. We feel the utter want of the calm of non-resistance; we feel that it would be better for us to resist. If you desire wealth, and know at the same time that the whole world is of opinion that he who aims at wealth is a very wicked man, you, perhaps, will not dare to plunge into the struggle for wealth, yet all along your mind is running day and night

after making money this is downright hypocrisy and will serve no purpose. Plunge into the world, and then, after a time, when you have suffered and enjoyed all that is in it, will renunciation come; then will calmness come. So fulfil your desire for power and everything else, and after you have fulfilled the desire, will come the time when you will know that they are all very little things; but until you have fulfilled this desire, until you have passed through that activity, it impossible for you to come to the state of calmness and serenity and self-surrender. These ideas of serenity and renunciation have been preached for thousands of years; every body born has heard of them from childhood, and yet we see very few in the world that have really reached that calm stage in life. I do not know if I have seen twenty persons in my life who are really calm and non-resisting, and I have travelled over half the world.

Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it; that is a safer way of progress than taking up other men's ideals which he can never hope to accomplish. For instance, we take a baby

and at once give him the task of walking twenty miles ; either the baby dies, or one in a thousand will crawl along twenty miles, to reach the end exhausted and half-dead. That is like what we generally try to do with the world. All men and women, in any society, are not of the same mind, of the same capacity, or of the same power to do things ; they must have different ideals, and we have no right to sneer at any ideal. Let every one do the best he can for realizing his own ideal. I should not be jndged by your ideal, nor you by mine. The apple tree should not be judged by the standard of the oak, nor the oak by that of the apple. To judge the apple tree you must take the apple standard ; and for the oak, there is its own standard ; and so it is with all of us.

Unity in variety is the plan of the creation. However men and women may vary individually, there is certainly unity in the background. Nevertheless, the different individual characters and classes of men and women are natural variations in the law of creation. Hence, we ought not to judge all of them by the same standard or put the same ideal before them. Such a course crea-

tes only an unnatural struggle, and the result is that man begins to hate himself and is hindered from becoming truly religious and good. Our duty is to encourage every one in his struggle to live unto his own highest ideal, and strive at the same time to make this ideal as near as possible to the truth.

In the Hindu system of morality, we find that this fact has been recognized form very ancient times ; and in their scriptures and books on ethics different rules are laid down for the different classes of men,—for the householder, for the *Sannyâsin* (the man who has renounced the world), and for the student.

The life of every individual in *Karma*, according to the Hindu scriptures has its peculiar duties apart from what belongs in common to universal humanity. The Hindu begins life as a student ; then he marries and becomes a hoseholder ; then after becoming old he retires, and lastly he gives up the world and becomes a *Sannyasin*. To each of these stages of life certain duties are attached which are determined by its own nature. No one of these stages of life is superior to

the other; the life of the married man is quite as great as that of the man who is not married, but has devoted himself to religious work. The king on his throne is as great and glorious as the scavenger in the street. Take him off his throne, make him do the work of the scavenger, and see how he fares. Take up the scavenger and see how he will rule. It is useless to say that the man who lives out of the world is a greater man than he who lives in the world; it is much more difficult to live in the world and worship God than to give it up and live a free and easy life. The various stages of life have become shortened in India to two,—that of the householder and then of the preacher. The householder marries and carries on his duties as a citizen, and the duty of the man who gives up the world is to devote his energies wholly to religion, to preach and to worship God. Now you will see whose life is the more difficult one. As I read out to you a few beautiful passages from the *Mahâ-Nirvana-Tantra*, which treats of this subject, you will see that it is a very difficult task for a man to be a householder, and perform all his duties perfectly.

"The houeholder should be devoted to God; the knowledge of God should be his goal of life. Yet he must work constantly, perform all his duties; whatever he does he must give it up to God."

It is the most difficult thing to do in this world, to work and not care for the result, to help a man and never think that he ought to be greateful to you, to do some good work and at the same time never look to see whether it brings you name or fame, or brings nothing at all. Even the most arrant coward becomes a brave man when the world begins to praise him. A fool can do heroic deeds when the approbation of society is on him, but for a man to do constantly good works without courting or caring for the approbation of his fellow-men is indeed the highest sacrifice any man can perform. The great duty of the householder is to earn a living, but he must take care that he does not get it by telling lies, or by cheating, or by robbing others; and he must remember that his life is for the service of God, his life is for service of the poor and the needy.

"Knowing that mother and father are the visible representavies of God, the house-

holder always, and by all means, must please them. If the mother is pleased, and the father, God is pleased with that man. That child is really a good child who never speaks harsh words to his parents.

"Before parents one must not utter jokes, must not show restlessness, must not show anger or temper. Before mother, or father, a child must bow down low, and he must stand up in their presence, and must not take a seat until they order him to sit.

"If the householder enjoys food and drink and clothes without first seeing that his mother and father, his children, his wife, and the poor, are supplied, he is committing a sin. The mother and the father are the causes of this body, so a man must undergo a thousand troubles in order to do good to them.

"Even so is his duty to his wife; no man should scold his wife, and he must always maintain her as if she were his own mother. And even when he is in the greatest difficulties and troubles, he must not show anger to his wife.

"He who thinks of another woman be-

sides his wife—if he touches her mentally with the least part of his mind—that man goes to dark hell. Even in private no man ought to touch another woman, or her clothes; even when she is not there the clothes owned by any woman other than his wife should not be touched.

"Before women he must not talk improper language, and never brag of his powers. He must not say 'I have done this, and I have done that.'

"The householder must always please his wife with wealth, clothes, love, faith, and words like nectar, and never do anything to disturb her. That man who has succeeded in getting the love of a chaste wife has succeeded in his religion and has all the virtues."

The following are duties towards children:—

"A son should be well taken care of until he is four years of age; after that he should be educated. When he is 20 years of age the father must not think of him as a little boy; he then is his own equal, being a hoseholder himself. Exactly in the same manner the daughter should be brought up,

and with the greatest care should be educated. And when she marries, the father ought to give her jewels and wealth.

"Then the duty of the man is towards his brothers and sisters, and towards the children of his brothers and sisters, if they are poor, and towards his other relatives, his friends and his servants. Then his duties are towards the people of the same village, and the poor, and any one that comes to him for help. Having sufficient means, if the householder does not take care to give gifts to his relatives and to the poor, know him to be only a brute; he is not a human being.

"Excessive care in food, in clothes, and in self-love, and taking excessive care in beautifying the body and parting the hair should be avoided. The householder must be pure in heart and clean in body, always active and always ready for work.

"To his enemies the householder must be a hero. Them he must resist. That is the duty of householder." He must not sit down in a corner and weep, and talk nonsense about non-resistance. If he does not show himself a hero to his enemies he has

not done his duty. And to his friends and relatives he must be as gentle as a lamb.

"It is the duty of the householder not to pay reverence to the wicked; because, if he reverences the wicked people of the world, he patronises wickedness; and it will be a great mistake if he disregards those who are worthy of respect, the good people. He must not be gushing in his friendships; he must not go out making friends everywhere; he must watch actions of the men he wants to make friends with, and their dealings with other men, reason upon them, and then make friends.

"These three things he must not talk of He must not talk in public of his own fame; he must not preach his own name or his own powers; he must not talk of his wealth, or of anything that has been mentioned to him privately.

"If he has committed some mistake, and if he has engaged himself in a work which is sure to fail, whether big or small, he must not talk of these things, or make them public." What is the use of talking of one's mistakes to the world? They cannot be undone. For what he has done he must

suffer; he as a householder must try and do better. The world sympathises only with the strong and the powerful.

"A man must not say he is poor, or that he is wealthy—he must not brag of his wealth. Let him keep his own counsel; this is his religious duty." This is not mere world-wisdom; if a man does not do so, he may be held to be immoral.

The householder is the basis, the prop, of the whole society; he is the principal earner. Everybody—the poor, the weak, the children and the women who do not work—all live upon the householder; so there must be certain duties that he has to perform, and these duties must make him feel strong to perform them, and not make him think that he is doing things beneath his ideal. Therefore, if he has done something weak, or has committed some mistake, he must not say so in public; and if he is engaged in some enterprise and knows he is sure to fail in it, he must not speak of it. Such self-exposure is not only uncalled for, but also unnerves the man and makes him unfit for the performance of his legitimate duties in life. At the same time, he must

struggle hard to acquire these things—firstly, knowledge, and secondly wealth. It is his duty, and if he does not do his duty he is nobody. A householder who does not struggle to get wealth is immoral. If he is lazy, and content to lead a lazy life, he is immoral, because upon him depend hundreds. If he gets riches hundreds of others will be thereby supported.

If there were not in this city hundreds who had striven to become rich, and who had acquired wealth, where would all this civilisation, and these almshouses and great houses be?

Going after wealth in such a case is not bad, because that wealth is for distribution. The householder is the centre of life and society. It is a worship for him to acquire and spend wealth nobly, for the householder who struggles to get rich by *good* means and for *good* purposes is doing practically the same thing for the attainment of salvation as the anchorite does in his cell when he is praying, for in them we see only the different aspects of the same virtue of self-surrender and self-sacrifice prompted by the feeling of devotion to God and to all that is His.

"He must struggle to acquire a good name by all means; and he must give up these things—he must not gamble; he must not move in the companionship of the wicked; he must not tell lies, and must not be the cause of trouble to others."

Often people enter into things they have not the means to accomplish, and the result is that they cheat others to attain their own ends. Then there is in all things the time factor to be taken into consideration; what at one time might be a failure, would perhaps, at another time be a very great success.

"The householder must speak truth, and speak gently, using words which people like, which will do good to others; neither must he brag of his own doings, nor talk of the business of other men.

"The householder by constructing reservoirs for holding water, by planting trees on the roadsides, by establishing almshouses for men and animals, by making roads and building bridges, goes towards the same goal as the greatest *Yogin*."

This is one part of the doctrine of *Karma-Yoga*—activity, the duty of the

householder. There is a line later on, where it says that "if the householder dies in battle, fighting for his country or his religion, he comes to the same goal as the *Yogin* by meditation," showing thereby that what is duty for one is not duty for another; at the same time, it does not say that this duty is lowering and the other elevating; each duty has its own place and fitness, and according to the circumstances in which we are placed, so must we perform our duties.

One idea comes out of all this, the condemnation of all weakness. This is a particular idea in all our teachings which I like, either in philosophy, or in religion, or in work. If you read the Vedas you will find this word always repeated—"fearlessness"—fear nothing. Fear is a sign of weakness. A man must go about his duties without taking notice of the sneers and the ridicule of the world.

If a man gives up and goes out of the world to worship God, he must not think that those, who live in the world and work for the good of the world, are not worshipping God; neither must those who live in the world, for wife and children, think that

those who give up the world are low vagabonds. Each is great in his own place. This thought I will illustrate by a story.

A certain king used to inquire of all the *Sannyâsins* that came to his country, "Which is the greater man—he who gives up the world and becomes a *Sannyasin*, or he who lives in the world and performs his duties as a householder?" Many wise men sought to solve the problem. Some asserted that the *Sannyasin* was the greater, upon which the king demanded that they should prove their assertion. When they could not, he ordered them to marry and become householders. Then others came and said, "The householder who performs his duties is the greater man." Of them, too, the king demanded proofs. When they could not give them, he made them also settle down as householders.

At last there came a young *Sannyasin*, and the king similarly inquired of him also. He answered, "Each, O king, is equally great in his place." "Prove this to me," asked the king. "I will prove it to you," said the *Sannyasin*, "but you must first come and live as I do for a few days, that

I may be able to prove to you what I say." The king consented and followed the *Sannyasin* out of his own territory and passed through many other territories, until they came at last to another kingdom. In the capital of that kingdom a great ceremony was going on. The king and the *Sannyasin* heard the sound of drums and music, and heard also the criers crying; the people were assembled in the streets in gala dress, and a great proclamation was being made. The king and the *Sannyasin* stood there to see what was going on. The crier was proclaiming loudly that the princess, daughter of the king of that country, was going to choose a husband from among those assembled before her.

It was an old custom in India for princesses to choose husbands in this way; and each one of them naturally had certain ideas of the sort of man she wanted for a husband; some would have the handsomest man, others would have the richest, and so on. This princess, in the most splendid array, was being carried on a throne, and the announcement was made by criers that the princess so-and-so was about to choose

her husband. Then all the princes of the neighbourhood put on their bravest attire and presented themselves before her. Sometimes they too had their own criers to enumerate their advantages and the reasons why they hoped the princess would choose them. As the princess was taken round and looked at them and heard what they had to offer, if she was not pleased with what she saw and heard, she said, to her bearers, "Move on," and no more notice was taken of the rejected suitors. If, however, the princess was pleased with any one of them she threw a garland of flowers upon him, and he became her husband.

The princess of the country to which our king and the *Sannyasin* had come was having one of these interesting ceremonies. She was the most beautiful princess in the world, and the husband of the princess would be ruler of the kingdom after her father's death. The idea of the princess was to marry the handsomest man, but she could not, for a long time, find the right one to please her. Several times these meetings had taken place, and yet the princess had not selected any one for her husband. This

meeting was the most splendid of all; more people than ever had come to it, and it was a most gorgeous scene. The princess came in on a throne, and the bearers carried her from place to place. She does not seem to care for any one, and every one becomes disappointed that this meeting also is to be broken up without any one being chosen. Just then comes a young man, a *Sannyasin*, as handsome as if the sun had come down to the earth, and he stands in one corner of the assembly, watching what is going on. The throne with the princess comes near him, and as soon as she sees the beautiful *Sannyasin*, she stops and throws the garland over him. The young *Sannyasin* seizes the garland and throws it off, exclaiming, "What nonsense do you mean by that? I am a *Sannyasin*. What is marriage to me? The king of that country thinks that perhaps this man is poor, and so does not dare to marry the princess; he says to him, "With my daughter goes half my kingdom now, and the whole kingdom after my death!" and puts the garland again on the *Sannyasin*. The young man throws it off once more, saying "What nonsense is this?

I do not want to marry," and walks quickly away from the assembly.

Now the princess had fallen so much in love with this young man that she said, "I must marry this man or I shall die;" and she went after him to bring him back. Then our other *Sannyasin*, who had brought our king there, said to him, "King, let us follow this pair;" so they walked after them, but at a good distance behind. The young *Sannyasin* who had refused to marry the princess walked out into the country for several miles, when he came to a forest and struck into it; and the princess followed him and the other two followed them. Now this young *Sannyasin* was well acquainted with that forest and knew all the intricate passages in it, and suddenly he jumped into one of these and disappeared, and the princess could not discover him. After trying for a long time to find him she sat down under a tree and began to weep, for she did not know the way to get out of the forest again. Then our king and the other *Sannyasin* came up to her and said, "Do not weep; we will show you the way out of this forest, but it is too dark for us to

find it now. Here is a big tree; let us rest under it, and in the morning we will go early and show you the road to get out."

Now a little bird and his wife and three little baby-birds lived on that tree, in a nest. This little bird looked down and saw the three people under the tree and said to his wife. "My dear, what shall be done; here are some guests in the house, and it is winter, and we have no fire?" So he flew away and got a bit of burning firewood in his beak and dropped it before the guests, and they added fuel to it and made a blazing fire. But the little bird was not satisfied. He said again to his wife, "My dear, what shall we do? There is nothing to give these people to eat, and they are hungry, and we are householders; it is our duty to feed any one who comes to the house. I must do what I can. I will give them my body." So he plunged down into the midst of the fire and perished. The guests saw him falling and tried to save him, but he was too quick for them and dashed into the fire and was killed.

The little bird's wife saw what her husband did, and she, said, "Here are three

persons and only one little bird for them to eat. It is not enough; it is my duty as a wife not to let my husband's effort be in vain; let them have my body also," and she plunged down into the fire and was burned to death.

Then the three baby-birds, when they saw what was done, and that there was still not enough food for the three guests, said, "Our parents have done what they could and still it is not enough. It is our duty to carry on the work of our parents; let our bodies go too." And they all dashed down into the fire also.

The three people could not eat these birds, and they were amazed at what they saw. Somehow or other they passed the night without food, and in the morning the king and the *Sannyasin* showed the princess the way, and she went back to father.

Then the *Sannyasin* said to the king, "King, you have seen that each is great in his own place. If you want to live in the world live like those birds, ready at any moment to sacrifice yourself for others. If you want to renounce the world be like that young man to whom the most beauti-

ful woman and a kingdom were as nothing. If you want to be a householder hold your life a sacrifice for the welfrte of others, and if you choose the life of renunciation do not even look at beauty, and money, and power. Each is great in his own place, but the duty of the one is not the duty of the other."

CHAPTER III.

Unselfish charity is the secret of saving work.

Helping others physically, by relieving their physical needs, is indeed great; but the help is greater, according as the need is greater and according as the help is far-reaching. If a man's want can be removed for an hour, it is helping him indeed; if his wants can be removed for a year it will be more help to him; if his wants can be removed for ever, it is surely the greatest help that can be given him. Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can remove our miseries for ever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time. If the nature of the man be changed, then alone all

his wants will vanish for ever. It is only with the knowledge of the spirit that the faculty of want is annihilated for ever; so helping man spiritually is the highest help that can be given to him; he who gives man spiritual knowledge is the greatest benefactor of mankind, and therefore it is that we always find that those are the most powerful of men who have helped man in satisfying his spiritual needs; indeed spirituality is the true basis of all our activities in life. A spiritually strong and sound man will be strong in every other respect, if he so wishes and until there is spiritual strength in mankind even physical needs cannot be well satisfied. Next to spiritual help comes intellectual help; the gift of knowledge is far higher than the giving of food and clothes; it is even higher than giving life to a man, becaues the real life of man consists in the acquision of the knowledge of truth; ignorance is death, knowledge is life. Life is of very little value, if it is a life in the dark, a life groping blindly through ignorance and misery. Next in order comes, of course, helping a man physically. Therefore, in considering the question of our helping

others, we must always bear in mind not to commit the mistake of thinking that physical help is the only help that can be given by man to man; physical help is the last and the least of its kind, because, there is, in regard to it, no permanent satisfaction. The misery that I feel when I am hungry is satisfied by eating, but hunger returns again; my misery can cease altogether only when I am satisfied beyond all want. Then hunger will not make me miserable; no distress, no misery, no sorrow will be able to move me. That help which tends to make us strong spiritually is, of course, help of the highest value; next to it comes intellecual help, and after that physical help.

The miseries of the world cannot be cured by simply offering physical help; until man's nature changes, these physical needs will always arise, and miseries will always be felt, and no amount of physical help given to the world will cure them completly. The only solution of the problem of all this evil and misery in the world is to make mankind pure. Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery we see. Let men have light, let them be spiritually strong

and if we can accomplish this, if all mankind becomes pure and spiritually strong and educated, then alone will misery cease in the world, and not before then. We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum; we may fill the land with hospitals, but the misery of man will still continue to exist until man's character changes.

We read in the *Bhagavat-Gita* again and again that we must all work incessantly, and that all work is by nature composed of good and evil. We cannot do any work which has not some part of good somewhere; there cannot be any work which has not a tendency to cause some harm somewhere. Every work that is done must necessarily be a mixture of good and evil; yet we are commanded to work incessantly; the good and the evil will both have their results, will produce their *Karma*; the good action will entail upon us good effect; the bad action, bad effect; and good and bad are both bondages of the soul. The solution reached in the *Gita* in regard to this bondage-producing nature of work is that, if we do not attach ourselves to the work we do, it

will not have any binding effect on our soul. We shall try to understand what is meant by this "non-attachment" to work.

This is the one great central idea in the *Gita*; to do work incessantly, but to be not attached to it or its results. "*Samskara*" can be translated very nearly by *inherent tendency*. Using the simile of a lake for the mind, every ripple or every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides, does not die out entirely, but leaves a mark behind; and there is the future possibility of that wave coming out again. This mark, whatever may be its nature, with the possibility of the of the wave reappearing, is what is called *Samskara*. Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, sub-consciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of such previous impressions on the mind. What I am just at this moment is the effect of the sum total of all the impressions due to my past life. This is really what is meant

by character ; each man's character is determined by the sum total of these impressions of past life and thought. If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good ; if bad ones prevail, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions or marks ; and they, unconsciously, will govern the tendency of his thought and work. In fact, these bad impressions are always working, and their expression in his case must be evil ;and that man will be a bad man ; he cannot help it ; the sum total of these impressions in him create the strong motive power for the doing of bad actions ; he will be like a machine in the hands of his impressions, and they will force him to do evil. Similarly, if a man thinks good thoughts and does good works, the sum total of his motive-making mental impressions will be good ; and they, in a similar manner, will force him to do good even in spite of himself. When a man has done so much good work and thought so many good thoughts that there is an irresistible tendency in his nature to do good, then, even if he wishes to do evil, his mind,

in the sum total of its tendencies, will not allow him to do so; the tendencies will turn him back from evil; he cannot but be wholly under the influence of the good tendencies. When such is the case, a man's good character is said to be established.

As the tortoise tucks his feet and head inside of his shell, and you may kill him and break him in pieces, and yet he will not come out, even so the character of that man who has control over his motive centres and organs is unchangeably established. He controls his own inner forces, and nothing can draw them out against his will. By this continuous reflex of good thoughts, good impressions moving over the surface of the mind, the tendency for doing good becomes strong and as the result we feel able to control the *indriyas* (the sensory and motor organs). Thus alone will character be established; then alone you get to truth; such a man is safe for ever; he cannot do any evil; you may throw him anywhere; you may place him in any company; there will be no danger for him. There is a still higher stage than having this good tendency, and that is the desire for liberation. You

must remember that freedom of the soul is the goal of all our India *Yogas*, and each of them is equally productive of the same result. Just by work men may get to where Buddha got largely by meditation or Christ by prayer. Buddha was a working *Jnani*; Christ was a *Bhakta*, and the same goal was reached by both of them. The difficulty is here. Liberation means entire freedom—freedom from the bondages of good, as well as from the bondages of evil. A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. There is a thorn in my finger, and I use another thorn to take the first thorn out, and when I have taken it out I throw both thorns aside; I have no necessity for keeping the second thorn, because both are thorns after all. So the bad tendencies are to be counteracted by the good tendencies, and the bad marks on the mind should be removed by the fresh waves of good impressions, until all that is evil almost disappears, or is subdued and held in control in a corner of the mind; but after that, the good tendencies have also to be conquered; only thus the "attached" becomes the "unattached." Work; but let not the action or the thought

produce any strong impression on the mind; let the ripples come and go; let huge actions proceed from the muscles and the brain, but let them not make any deep impression on your soul. How can this be done? We may see it easily enough that the impression of any action, to which we attach ourselves, remains lastingly.

I may meet hundreds of persons during the day, and among them meet also one whom I love; and when I retire at night I may try to think of all the faces I saw, but only that face comes before the mind—the face which I meet perhaps only for one minute, and which I loved; all the others have vanished. My attachment to this particular person caused a deeper impression on my mind than all the other faces. Physiologically, the impressions have all been the same; every one of the faces that I saw got itself pictured on the retina, and the brain took the pictures in, and yet there was no similarity of effect upon the mind. But in the case of that man, of whom I caught, perhaps, only a glimpse, a deeper impression was made, because unlike his face, the other faces found no favourable association in my

mind ; most of them, perhaps, were entirely new faces about which I had never thought before, but that one face, of which I got only a glimpse, somehow found fovourable associations inside. Perhaps I had pictured him in my mind for years, knew hundreds of things about him, and this one new vision of him found hundreds of kindred things inside my mind, and all these associations were aroused ; this impression on my mental vision was a hundred times more than the seeing of all those different faces together, and, such being the case, a tremendous effect would be at once and naturally produced by it upon the mind.

Therefore, be "unattached ;" let things work ; let brain centres work ; work incessantly, but let not even a single ripple conquer the mind. Work as if you were a stranger in this land, a sojourner ; work incessantly, but do not bind yourselves to the things of this world ; bondage is terrible. This world is not our habitation, it is only one of the many stages through which we are passing. Remember that great saying of the *Sankhya*. "The whole of nature is for the soul, not the soul for nature." The very

reason of nature's existence is for the education of the soul; it has no other meaning; it is there because the soul must have knowledge, and through knowledge free itself. If we remember this always, we shall never be attached to nature; we shall know that nature is a book in which we are to read, and that when we have gained the required knowledge, the book is of no more value to us. Instead of that, however, we are identifying ourselves with nature; we are thinking that the soul is for nature, that the spirit is for the flesh, and, as the common saying has it, we think that man "lives to eat" and not "eats to live;" we are continually making this mistake; we are regarding nature as ourselves and are becoming attached to it; and as soon as this attachment comes, there is the deep impression on the soul, which binds us down and makes us work not for freedom but like slaves.

The whole gist of this teaching is that you should work like a *master* and not as a *slave*; work incessantly, but do not do slave's work. Do you not see how everybody works? Nobody can be altogether at rest; ninety-nine per cent of mankind work

like slaves, and the result is misery ; it is all selfish work. Work through freedom ! Work through love ! The word love is very difficult to understand ; love never comes until there is freedom. There is no true love possible in the slave. If you buy a slave and tie him down in chains and make him work for you, he will work like a drudge, but there will be no love in him. So when we ourselves work for the things of the world as slaves, there can be no love in us, and our work is not true work. The same thing applies to the work done for relatives and friends, more to work done for our own selves. Selfish work is slave's work ; and here is a proof whether any work is selfish or not. Every act of love brings happiness with it ; there can be no true act of love which does not bring peace and blessedness as the result of its reaction. Real existence, real knowledge, and real love are eternally connected with one another, and in fact form three in one : where one of them is, the others also must be ; they are the three aspects of the one without a second—the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. When that existence becomes relative, we see it as the world ; that knowledge be-

comes in its turn modified into the knowledge of the things of the world; and that bliss forms the foundation of all true love known to the heart of man. Therefore true love can never react so as to cause pain either to to the lover or to the beloved. Suppose a man loves a woman; he wishes to have her all to himself and feels extremely jealous about her every moment; he wants her to sit near him, to stand near him, and to eat and move at his bidding. He is a slave to her and wishes to have her as his slave. That is not love; it is a kind of morbid affection of the slave, falsely insinuating itself as love. It cannot be love, because it is painful; if she does not do what he wants, it brings him pain. With love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss; if it does not, it is not love; we are then mistaking something else for love. When you have succeeded in loving your husband, your wife, your children, the whole world, the universe, in such a manner that there is no reaction of pain or jealousy, no selfish feeling, then you are in a fit state to be unattached.

Krishna says, "Look at me, Arjuna! If

I stop from work for one moment the whole universe will die. Yet I have nothing to gain from the universe; I am the one Lord; I have nothing to gain from work; but why do I work? Because I love the world." God is unattached because He loves; that kind of real love makes us unattached. Wherever there is mere worldly attachment, the tremendous clinging to the things of the world, you must know that it is all physical, a sort of physical attraction between sets of particles of matter, something that attracts two bodies nearer and nearer all the time, and if they cannot get near enough produces pain, but where there is *real* love it does not rest on physical attachment at all. Loving persons may be a thousand miles away from one another, true love will be all the same, it does not die, and there will never be from it any painful reaction.

To attain this unattachment is almost a life-work, but as soon as we get to this point we attain the goal of love and become free; the bondage of nature falls from us, and we see nature as it is; nature forges no more chains for us; we stand entirely free and

take not the refults of work into consideration; who then cares for what the results may be? The man who works through freedom and love need not care for results, as he is himself altogether unselfish and his work cannot react so as to produce pain anywhere.

Do you ask anything from your children in return for what you have given them? It is your duty to work for them, and there the matter ends. Whatever you wish to do for a particular person, a city, or a state, do it by all means, but assume the same attitude as you have towards your children—expect nothing in return. If you can incessantly take the position in which you are always the giver, in which everything given by you is a free offering to the world, without any thought of any return, then will not your work bind you by attachment. Attachment comes only where we expect something in return for what we do.

If working like slaves results in selfishness and attachment to results, working as masters of our own minds gives rise to the bliss of unattachment. We often talk of right and justice, but we find that in the

world right and justice are dealt with like mere baby's talk. There are only two things that are positively active in guiding the conduct of men; they are might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably the exercise of selfishness. All men and women try to make the most of whatever power or advantage they have. Mercy is heaven itself; to be good we have all to be merciful. Even justice and right and might stand on mercy. All thought of obtaining any return for the work we do hinders our spiritual progress; nay, in the end they bring much misery in their train. It is only work that is done as a free-will offering to humanity and to nature that does not bring with it any binding attachment. There is another way in which this idea of mercy and selfless charity can be put into practice; that is, by looking upon work as "worship" in case we believe in a personal God. Here we give up all the fruits of our work unto the Lord; and, worshipping Him thus, we have no right to expect anything from mankind for the work we do. The Lord himself works incessantly and is ever without attachment. Just as water cannot wet the lotus

leaf, so work cannot bind the unselfish man by giving rise to attachment to results. The self-less and unattached man may go into the very heart of a crowded and sinful city; he will not thereby become mixed in sin.

This idea of complete self-sacrifice is illustrated in the following story:—After the battle of Kurukshetra the five Pandava-brothers performed a great sacrifice and made very large gifts to the poor. All the people expressed amazement at the greatness and richness of the sacrifice, and said that such a sacrifice the world had never seen before. But, after the ceremony, there came a little mungoose; half his body was golden, and the other half was brown; and he began to roll on the floor of the sacrificial hall. Then he said to those around, "You are all liars; this is no sacrifice." "What!" they exclaimed, "you say this is no sacrifice; do you not know how money and jewels were poured out upon the poor and every one became rich and happy? This was the most wonderful sacrifice any man ever performed." But the mungoose said, "There was once a little village, and in it there dwelt a poor Brahmin, with his wife, his son and his

son's wife. They were very poor and lived on alms gained by preaching and teaching, for which men made small gifts to them. There came in that land a three years' famine, and the poor Brahmin suffered more than ever. At last for five days the family starved, but on the sixth day the father brought home a little barley flour, which he had been fortunate enough to find, and he divided it into four parts, one for each member of the family. They prepared it for their meal, and just as they were about to eat it a knock came at the door. The father opened it, and there stood a guest. Now in India a guest is a sacred person; he is as a god for the time being, and must be treated as such. So the poor Brahmin said, 'Come in, sir; you are welcome.' He set before the guest his own portion of the food, and the guest quickly ate it up, and then said, 'Oh, sir, you have killed me; I have been starving for ten days, and this little bit has but increased my hunger.' Then the wife said to her husband, 'Give him my share,' but the husband said, 'Not so.' The wife, however, insisted, saying, 'Here is a poor man, and it is our duty as householders to see that he

is fed, and it is my duty as a wife to give him my portion, seeing that you have no more to offer him.' Then she gave her share to the guest, and he ate it up, and said he was still burning with hunger. So the son said, 'Take my portion also; it is the duty of a son to help his father to fulfil his obligations.' The guest ate that, but remained still unsatisfied; so the son's wife gave him her portion also. That was sufficient, and the guest departed, blessing them. That night those four people died of starvation. A few granules of that flour had fallen on the floor, and when I rolled my body on them, half of it became golden, as you see it. Since then I have been all over the world, hoping to find another sacrifice like that, but nowhere have I found one; nowhere else has the other half of my body been turned into gold. That is why I say this is no sacrifice."

This idea of charity is going out of India; grand men are becoming less and less. When I was first learning English I read an English story book, where the first story was about a dutiful boy who had gone out to work and had given some of his money to

his old mother, and this was praised in three or four pages. What was that after all? No Hindu boy can ever understand the great moral merit of that story. Now I understand it when I hear the Western idea—every man for himself. And some men take everything for themselves, and fathers and mothers and wives and children go to the wall. That should never and nowhere be the ideal of the householder.

Now you see what *Karma-Yoga* means; even at the point of death to help any one, without asking questions. Be cheated millions of times and never ask a question, and never think of what you are doing. Never vaunt of your gifts to the poor or expect their gratitude, but rather be grateful to them for giving you the occasion of practising charity on them. Thus it is plain that to be an ideal householder is a much more difficult task than to be an ideal *Sannyasin*; the true life of work is indeed as hard as, if not harder than, the equally true life of renunciation.

CHAPTER IV.

What is duty?

It is necessary in the study of *Karma-Yoga* to know what work is, and with that comes naturally the question what duty is. If I have to do something I must first know my duty in regard to it, and then it is that I can do it well. The idea of duty, as already shewn, is so different in different nations. The Mohammedan says that what is written in his book the Qur'an, is his duty; the Hindu says that what is in his book, the Vedas, is his duty; and the Christian says that what is in his Bible is his duty. So we find that there are and must be varied ideas of duty, differing according to different states in life, and differing with different historical periods and with different nations. The term "duty," like every other universal abstract term, it is impossible clearly to define; we can only get an idea of it by describing its surroundings and by knowing its practical operations and results. When certain things occur before us we have all a natural or trained impulse to act in a certain

manner towards them; when this impulse comes the mind begins to think about the situation; sometimes it thinks that it is good to act in a particular manner under the given conditions, at other times it thinks that it is wrong to act in the same manner even in the very same circumstances. The ordinary idea of duty everywhere is that every good man follows the dictates of his own mind, or conscience as it is more frequently characterised. But what is it that makes an act a duty? If a Christian finds a piece of beef before him and does not eat it to save his own life, or will not give it to save the life of another man, he is sure to feel that he has not done his duty. But if a Hindu dares to eat that piece of beef or to give it to another Hindu, he is a equally sure to feel that he too has not done his duty; the Hindu's training and education make him feel that way. In the last century there were recognised bands of robbers in India called *Thugs*; they thought it was their duty to kill any man they could and take away all his money; the larger the number of men they killed thus, the better they thought they were. Ordinarily, if

man goes out into the street and shoots down another man, he is apt to feel sorry for it, thinking that he had done wrong, and that he had not clearly done his duty. But if the very same man, standing as a fighting soldier in the ranks of his regiment, kills not one man but twenty men by shooting them down, he is certain to feel glad and think that he did his duty remarkably well. Therefore it must be easy to see that it is not the thing done that defines a duty. To give an objective definition of duty is thus entirely impossible; there is no such thing as an objectively defined duty. Yet there is duty from the subjective side ; any action that makes us go Godward is a good action and is our duty ; any action that makes us go downward is an evil action, and is not our duty. From the subjective stand-point we may see that certain acts have a tendency to exalt and ennoble us, while certain other acts have a tendency to degrade and to brutalise us. But it is not possibie to make out with certainity which acts have which kind of tendency in relation to all persons of all sorts and conditions. There is, however, only one idea of duty which has been uni-

versally accepted by all mankind, of all ages and sects and countries, and that has been summed up in a Sanskrit aphorism thus :—"Do not injure any being ; not injuring any being is virtue ; injuring any being is vice." This is the only universal and objective definition af duty that we can find. As to the subjective aspect of duty we cannot say more than that the spirit in which certain acts are done happens to be elevating and ennobling, while the spirit in which certain other acts are done tends to lower us often even in our own esteem.

The *Bhagavad-Gitta* frequently alludes to duties dependent upon birth and position in life. Birth and position in life and in society largely determine the mental and moral attitude of individuals towards the various activities of life. It is therefore our duty to do that work which will exalt and ennoble us in accordance with the ideals and activities of the society in which we are born. But it must be particularly remembered that the same ideals and activities do not prevail in all societies and countries ; our ignorance of this is the main cause of much of the hatred of one nation against another.

An American thinks that whatever an American does in accordance with the custom of his country is the best thing to do, and that whoever does not follow his custom must be a very wicked man. A Hindu thinks that his customs are the only right ones and are the best in the world, and that whosoever does not obey them must be the most wicked man living. This is quite a natural mistake into which we all fall easily. It is a very harmful mistake, and is the cause of more than half of the uncharitableness to be found in the world. When I came to this country and was going through the Chicago Fair, a man came behind me and gave a very violent pull at my turban. I looked back and saw that he was a very gentlemanly-looking man, neatly dressed. I talked to him in English, and when I did that he became very much abashed, apparently because he did not think I could talk English. On another occasion in the same Fair another man gave me a push. When I asked him the reason why he did so, he also became abashed and at last stammered out an apology and said, "Why do you dress that way?" The sympathies of these men

were limited within the narrow range of their own language and their own fashion of dress. That very man who asked me why I did not dress as he did, and wanted to ill-treat me because of my dress is in all probability a very good man; he may be a good father and a good citizen in every way; but the kindliness of his nature died out as soon as he saw a man in a different dress. Strangers are exploited in all countries, because they do not generally know how to defend themselves in the new situation; therefore they carry home false impressions of the peoples they see. Sailors and soldiers and traders behave in foreign lands in very queer ways, although they would not dream of doing any such thing in their own country; perhaps this is why the Chinese call Europeans and Americans "foreign devils."

Therefore the one point we ought to remember is that we should always try to see the duty of others through their own eyes, and never wish to judge the customs of other races or other peoples by our own standard. "I am not the standard of the universe." This is the great lesson to learn. "I have to

accommodate my self to the world, and not the world to me." Therefore we see that environments change the nature of our duties, and doing in the best way that duty, which is ours at any particular time, is the best thing we can do in this world. Let us do that duty which is ours by birth ; and when we have done that, let us do the duty which is ours by our position in life and in society. Each man is placed in some position or other in life, and must do the duties of that position. There is, however, one great danger in human nature, viz, that man never looks clearly at himself. He thinks he is quite as fit to be on the throne as the king. Even if he is, he must first show that he has fully discharged the duty of his own position ; and when he has done that, higher duties will come to him. Let a man show to the world that he is strong enough to do well the little task that has been assigned to him ; and when he has done that, another and a higher task will come to him. When we begin to work earnestly in the world, nature gives us blows right and left and soon enables us to find out our due position. No man can long occupy

satisfactorily a position for which he is not fit. There is no use in grumbling against nature's adjustment. He who does the lower work is not therefore a lower man. No man should be judged by the mere nature of his duties, but all are to be judged by the manner and the spirit in which they perform them.

Later on we shall find that even this idea of duty has to be changed, and that the greatest and the noblest work is done only when there is almost no motive urging us from behind. Yet it is work through the sense of duty that leads us to work without any idea of duty; when work will become worship—nay, something higher, then work will stand alone for its own sake. But that is the highest ideal, and the way to it lies through duty. We shall find that the philosophy behind all conceptions of duty, whether it be in the form of ethics or of love, is the same as in every kind of *Yoga*—the object being the attenuating of the lower self so that the real higher self may shine forth in glory; to circumscribe the frittering away of energies on the lower planes of existence, so that the soul may manifest

itself on the higher and grander planes. This is accomplished by the continuous denial of low desires, which duty rigorously requires. The whole organization of society has thus been developed consciously or unconsciously on the land of actions and in the field of experience, where, by limiting the low desires of selfishness, we open the way to an unlimited expansion of the real higher nature of man. It is a well ascertained law of duty that, subjectively looked at, selfishness and sensuality lead to vice and wickedness, while unselfish love and self-control lead to the development of virtue.

And duty is seldom sweet. It is only when love greases its wheels that it runs smoothly; else it is a continuous friction. What parents can otherwise do their duties to their children? What children to their parents? What husband to his wife? What wife to her husband? Do we not meet with cases of friction every day in our lives? Duty is sweet only through love, and love shines alone in freedom. Yet is it freedom to be a slave to the senses, to anger, to jealousies and a hundred other petty things that must and do occur every day in human

life? In all these little roughnesses that we meet with in life, the highest expression of freedom and of power is to forbear. Women, slaves to their own irritable, jealous tempers, are often apt to attribute blame to their husbands, and assert their own "freedom," as they think, not knowing that they are only proving thus that they are slaves. So it is with husbands who are eternally finding fault with their wives.

Chastity is the first virtue in man or woman, and the man who, however he may have strayed away, cannot be brought to the right path by a gentle and loving and chaste wife, is indeed very rare. This world is not yet as bad as that. I have heard much about brutal husbands all over the world and about the impurity of men, but my experience shows that there are quite as many brutal and impure women as men. If the women of America were as good and pure as their own constant assertions would lead a foreigner to believe, I am perfectly satisfied that there would not be one impure man in this country. With whom could men then become impure? What brutality is there which purity and chastity cannot conquer?

good, chaste wife, who thinks of every other man except her own husband as her child and has the attitude of a mother towards all men, will grow so great in the power of her purity that there cannot be a single man, however brutal, who will not breathe an atmosphere of holiness in her presence. Similarly every husband must look upon all women, except his own wife, in the light of his own mother or daughter or sister. That man, again, who wants to be a teacher of religion must look upon every woman as his mother, and always behave towards her as such.

The position of the mother is the highest in the world, as it is the one place in which we are to learn and exercise the greatest unselfishness. The love of God is the only love that is higher than a mother's love ; all other kinds of love are lower. It is the duty of the mother to think of her children first and then of herself. But, instead of that, if the parents are always thinking of themselves first, even in such small things as food, taking the best portions to themselves and letting the children take what they can, the result is that the relation between

parents and children becomes as good as the relation between birds and their young ones who, as soon as they are fledged, do not recognize any parents. Blessed, indeed, is the man who is able to look upon woman as the representative of the motherhood of God. Blessed, indeed, is the woman to whom man represents the fatherhood of God. Blessed are the children who look upon their parents as Divinity manifested on earth.

The only way to rise is by doing the duty that is in our hands now, and making ourselves stronger; and thus go on growing higher and higher, until we reach the highest state. Nor is duty of any kind to be slighted. I say again that a man who does the lower work is not, therefore, a lower man, than he who does the higher work; a man should not be judged by the nature of his duties, but by the manner in which he does them. His manner of doing them and his power to do them are indeed the test of the man. A shoe-maker, who can turn out a strong, nice pair of shoes in the shortest possible time, is a better man, according to his profession and his work, than a professor who talks nonsense every day of his life.

A certain young *Sannyasin* went to a forest and there mediated and worshipped, and practised *Yoga* for a long time. After twelve years of hard work and practice, he was one day sitting under a tree, when some dry leaves fell upon his head. He looked up and saw a crow and a crane fighting on the top of the tree, and they made him very angry. He said, "What ! Dare you throw those dry leaves upon my head !", and as he looked upon them with anger a flash of fire burst from his head—such was the *Yogin*'s power—and burnt the birds to ashes. He was very glad ; he was almost overjoyed at this development of power in himself ; he could burn at a glance the crow and the crane. After a time he had to go into the town to beg his bread. He came and stood at a door and said :—Mother, give me food." A voice came from inside the house :—"Wait a little, my son." The young man thought :—"You wretched woman, how dare you make me wait ! You do not know my power yet." While he was thinking thus, the voice from inside came again :—"Boy, don't be thinking too much of yourself. Here is neither crow nor crane." He was

astonished ; still he had to wait. At last a woman came, and he fell at her feet and said :—"Mother, how did you know that?" She said :—"My boy, I do not know your *Yoga* or your practices. I am a common everyday woman, but I made you wait because my husband is ill, and I was nursing him, and that was my duty. All my life I have struggled to do my duty. As a daughter, when I was unmarried, I did my duty ; and now, when I am married, I still do my duty ; that is all the *Yoga* I practice, and by doing my duty I have become illumined ; thus I could read your thoughts and what you had done in the forest. But if you want to know something higher than this, go to such and such a town and to the market, and there you will find a butcher ; and he will tell you something that you will be very glad to learn." The *Sannyasin* thought : —"Why should I go to that town and to a butcher !" (Butchers are the lowest class in our country, they are called *Chandalas* ; they are not touched because they are butchers ; they do in addition to their work as butchers the duty of scavengers and so forth.)

But after what he had seen, his mind opened a little, so he went; and when he came near the city he found the market, and there saw, at a distance, a big, fat butcher slashing away at animals with big knives, talking and bargaining with different people. The young man said, "Lord help me! Is this the man from whom I am going to learn wisdom? He is the incarnation of a demon, if he is anything at all." In the meantime this man looked up and said, "O Swamin, did that lady send you here? Take a seat until I have done my business." The *Sannyasin* thought, "What is it that comes to me here?" And he took a seat; but the man went on, and after he had finished all his selling and bargaining, he took his money and said to the *Sannyasin*, "Come here, sir; come to my home." So they went there, and the butcher gave him a seat, and said, "Wait there." Then he went into the house, and there, were his father and mother. He washed them and fed them and did all he could to please them, and then came and took a seat before the *Sannyasin* and said, "Now, sir, you are come here to see me; what can I do for you?"

Then this great *Sannyasin* asked him a few questions about the soul and about God, and the butcher gave him a lecture which forms even to-day a very celebrated work in India —the "*Vyadha-Gita.*" It contains one of the highest flights in the *Vedanta*, the highest flight of metaphysics. You have heard of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna's sermon. When you have finished reading that, you should read the *Vyadha-Gita*; it contains the concentrated essence of the *Vedanta* philosophy. When the butcher finished his teaching, the *Sannyasin* felt astonished. He said, "Why are you in that body? With such knowledge as yours why are you in a butcher's body, and doing such filthy, ugly work?" "My son," replied the *Chandala* "no duty is ugly, no duty is impure. My birth, circumstances and environments were there when I was born. In my boyhood I learnt the trade; I am unattached, and I try to do my duty well. I try to do my duty as a householder, and I try to do all I can to make my father and mother happy. I neither know your *Yoga*, nor have I become a *Sannyasin*, nor ever did I go out of the world into a forest; nevertheless, all this

that you have heard and seen has come to me through the unattached doing of the duty which belongs to my position.'

There is a sage in India, a great *Yogin*, one of the most wonderful men I have ever seen in my life. He is a peculiar man; he will not teach any one; if you ask him a question he will not answer. It is too much for him to take up the position of a teacher; he will not do it. If you ask a question, and if you wait for some days, in the course of conversation he will bring the subject out himself, and wonderful light will he then throw on it. He told me once the secret of perfect work, and what he said was, 'Let the end and the means be joined into one, and that is the secret of work.' When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being. This worship of work is for its own sake. Thus, in this story, the butcher and the woman did their duty with cheerfulness and whole-heartedness and willingness; and the result was that they became illuminated. Every duty is holy, and devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God;

it is certainly a source of great help in enlightening and emancipating the deluded and ignorance-encumbered soul of the *Baddhas*—the bound ones. This story clearly shows us that the right performance of the duties of any station in life, without our being attached to results and consequences, leads us to the highest realisation of the perfection of the soul.

Our duties are largely determined by our environments, and there can be no *high* and *low* in regard to them. It is the worker who is attached to results that grumbles about the nature of the duty which has fallen to his lot to do; to the unattached worker all duties are equally good, and form efficient instruments with which selfishness and sensuality may be effectively killed, and the freedom of the soul unfailingly secured. We are all apt to think too highly of ourselves. When I was a boy I used to dream that I was a great emperor and a great this and a great that; so I suppose, you too have dreamt. But it is all a dream and nature's justice is uniformly stern and unrelenting. Therefore our duties are also determined by our deserts to a much larger extent than

we are willing to grant. By doing well the duty which is nearest to us, the duty which is in our hands now, we make ourselves stronger; and improving our strength in this manner step by step, we may even reach a state in which it shall be our privilege to do the most coveted and honored duties in life and in society. Competition rouses envy, and it kills the kindliness of the heart. To the grumbler all duties are distasteful; nothing will ever satisfy him, and his whole life is doomed to prove a failure. Let us work on, doing as we go whatever happens to be our duty, and being ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel. Then surely shall we see the Light!

CHAPTER V.

We help ourselves, not the world.

Before considering further how devotion to duty helps us in our spiritual progress, let me place before you in as breef a compass as possible another aspect of what we in India mean by *Karma*. In every religion there are three parts; first, there is the philosophy; then there is the mythology

and lastly, there is the ritual. The philosophy is, of course, the essence of every one of the religions; the mythology gives expression to that philosophy and explains and illustrates it by means of the more or less legendary lives of great men and stories and fables of wonderful things and so on; ritual gives to that philosophy a still more concrete form so that every one may grasp it—ritual is in fact concretised philosophy. This ritual is *Kârma*; it is necessary in every religion, because most of us cannot understand abstract spiritual things until we grow very much spiritually. It is easy for men to think that they can understand anything, but when it comes to practical experience they find that abstract ideas are often very hard to comprehend. Therefore symbols are of great help and we cannot dispense with the symbolical method of putting things before us. From time immemorial symbols have been used by all kinds of religions. In one sense we cannot but think in symbols; words themselves are symbols of thought, In another sense everything in the universe may be looked upon as a symbol. The whole universe is a symbol and God is the essence

behind. This kind of symbology is not simply the creation of man; it is not that certain people belonging to a religion sit down together and think out certain symbols, hands and feet and so forth and bring them into existence out of their own minds. The symbols of religion have a natural growth. Otherwise, why is it that certain symbols are associated with certain ideas in the mind of almost every one? Certain symbols are universally prevalent. Many of you think that the cross came first into existence as a symbol in connection with the Christian religion; but as a matter of fact it existed before Christianity was, before Moses was born, before the *Vedas* were given out, before there was any human record of human things. The cross may be found to have been in existence among the Aztecs and the Phoeniciens: every one seems to have had the cross. Again the symbol of the crucified Saviour, of a man crucified upon a cross appears to have been known to almost every nation. The circle has been a great symbol throughout the world. Then there is the most universal of

all symbols, the *Swastika* 卐. At one time it was thought that the Buddhists carried it all over the world with them, but it has been found out that ages before Buddhism it was used among nations. In old Babylon and in Egypt it was to be found. What does this show? All these symbols could not have been purely conventional. There must be some reason for them, some natural association between them and the human mind. Language is not the result of convention; it is not that people ever agreed to represent certain ideas by certain words; there never was an idea without a corresponding word or a word without a corresponding idea; ideas and words are in their nature inseparable. The symbols to represent ideas may be sound symbols or colour symbols. Deaf and dumb people have to think with other than sound symbols. Every thought in the mind has a form as its counterpart; this is called in Sanskrit philosophy *nama-rupa*—name and form. It is as impossible to create by convention a system of symbols as it is to create a langu-

age. In the world's ritualistic symbols we have an expression of the religious thought of humanity. It is easy to say that there is no use of rituals and temples and all such paraphernalia; every baby says that in modern times. But it must be easy for all to see that those who worship inside a temple are in many respects different from those who will not worship there. Therefore the association of particular temples, rituals and other concrete forms with particular religions has a tendency to bring into the mind of the followers of those religions the thoughts for which those concrete things stand as symbols: and it is not safe to ignore rituals and symbology altogether. The study and practice of these things form naturally a part of *Karma-Yoga.*

There are many other aspects of this science of work. One among them is to know the relation between thought and word and what can be achieved by the power of the word. In every religion the power of the word is recognised, so much so that in some of them creation itself is said to have come out of the word. The external aspect of the thought of God is the Word, and, as

God thought and willed before He created, creation came out of the Word. In this stress and hurry of our materialistic life our nerves lose thing sensibility and become hardened like an iron rope. The older we grow, the longer we are knocked about in the world, the more hardened do our nerves become; and we are apt to neglect things that are even persistently and prominently happening around us. Human nature, however, asserts itself sometimes and we are led to inquire into and wonder at some of these common occurrences; and wondering thus is the first step in the acquisition of light. Apart from the higher philosophic and religious value of the Word we may see that sound symbols play a prominent part in the drama of human life. I am talking to you, I am not touching you; the pulsations of the air caused by my speaking go into your ear, they touch your nerves and produce effects in your minds. You cannot resist this. What can be more wonderful than this? One man calls another a fool, and this other stands up and clenches his fist and lands a blow on his nose. Look at the power of the word! There

is a woman weeping and miserable ; another woman comes along and speakes to her a few gentle words; the doubled up frame of the weeping woman becomes straightened at once, her sorrow is gone and she already begins to smile. Think of the power of words ! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without enquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is also a part of *Karma-Yoga.*

Our duty to others means helping others ; that is, doing good to the world. Why should we do good to the world ? Apparently to help the world, but it is really to help ourselves. We should always try to help the world ; that should be the highest motive in us ; but, when we analyse the thing properly, we find that the world does not require our help at all. This world was not made that you or I should come and help it. I once read a sermon in which it was said:— "All this beautiful world is very good, because it gives us time and opportunity to help others.' Apparently, this is a very beautiful sentiment; but, in one sense, it is quite a curse to

think so; for is it not a blasphemy to say that the world needs our help? We cannot deny that there is much misery in the world; to go out and help others is, therefore, the highest motive we can have, although, in the long run, we shall find that helping others is only helping ourselves. As a boy I had some white mice. They were kept in a little box and had little wheels made for them, and when the mice tried to cross the wheels, the wheels turned and turned, and the mice never got anywhere. So it is with the world and our helping it. The only help is that we get moral exercise. This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. If a blind man begins to think of the world, it is either as soft or hard, or as cold or hot. We are a mass of happiness or misery; we have seen that it is so with us hundreds of times in our lives. As a rule, the young are optimistic and the old pessimistic. The young have all life before them; the old are complaining; their day is gone; hundreds of desires, which they cannot fulfil, are struggling in their hearts. Life is almost at an end for them. Both are foolish neverthe-

less. This life is neither good nor evil. It is according to the different states of mind in which we look at it. The most practical man would neither call it good nor evil. Fire, by itself, is neither good nor evil. When it keeps us warm we say:—"How beautiful is fire!" When it burns our fingers we blame the fire. Still, in itself it is neither good nor bad. According as we use it, it produces in us the feeling of good or bad; and so also is this world. It is perfect. By perfection is meant that it is perfectly fitted to meet its ends. We may all be perfectly sure that it will go on beautifully well without us, and need not bother our heads wishing to help it.

Yet we must do good; the desire to do good is the highest moral motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man," but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by giving a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power

of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect. All good acts tend to make us pure and perfect. What can we do at best? Build a hospital, make roads, or erect charity asylums! We may organize a charity and collect two or three millions of dollars, build a hospital with one million, with the second give balls and drink champagne, and of the third let the officers steal half, and leave the rest finally to reach the poor; but what are all these? One mighty wind, in five minutes can break all your buildings up. What shall we do then? One volcanic eruption may sweep away all our roads and hospitals and cities and buildings. Let us give up all this foolish talk of doing good to the world. It is not waiting for your or my help; yet we must work and constantly do good, because it is a blessing to ourselves. That is the only way we can become perfect. No beggar whom we have helped has ever owed a single cent to us; we owe everything to him, because he has allowed us to exercise our powers of piety and pity and charity on him. It is entirely wrong to think that we have done, or can do, good to the world, or to think that we

have helped such and such people. It is a foolish thought, and all foolish thoughts bring misery. We think that we have helped some man and expect him to thank us; and, because he does not, unhappiness comes to us. Why should we expect anything in return for what we do? Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow man? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this pain of vain expectation, and could cheerfully do good work in the world. Never will unhappiness or misery come through work done without attachment. The world will go on with its happiness and misery through eternity.

There was a poor man who wanted some money; and, somehow, he had heard that, if he could get hold of a ghost or some spirit, he might command him to bring money or anything he liked; so he was very anxious to get hold of a ghost. He went about searching for a man who would give him a ghost; and at last he found a sage, with great powers, and besought this sage to help him. The sage asked him what he would do with

a ghost. "I want a ghost to work for me; teach me how to get hold of one, sir; I desire it very much," replied the man. But the sage said, "Don't disturb yourself, go home." The next day the man went again to the sage and began to weep and pray. "Give me a ghost; I must have a ghost, sir, to help me." At last the sage was disgusted, and said, "Take this charm, repeat this magic word, and a ghost will come, and whatever you say to this ghost he will do for you. But beware; they are terrible beings, and must be kept continually busy. If you fail to give him work he will take your life." The man replied:—"That's easy; I can give him work for all his life." Then he went to a forest, and after long repetition of the magic word, a huge ghost appeared before him, with big teeth, and said:—"I am a ghost. I have been conquered by your magic. But you must keep me constantly employed. The moment you fail to give me work, I will kill you." The man said:—"Build me a palace," and the ghost said, "It is done; the palace is built." "Bring me money," said the man. "Here is your money," said the ghost. "Cut this forest

down, and build a city in its place." "That is done," said the ghost; "anything more?" Now the man began to be frightened and said ;—"I can give him nothing more to do; he does everything in a trice." The ghost said :—"Give me something to do or I will eat you up." The poor man could find no further occupation for him, and was frightened. So he ran and ran and at last reached the sage, and said, "Oh, sir, protect my life!" The sage asked him what the matter was, and the man replied ;—"I have nothing to give the ghost to do. Everything I tell him to do he does in a moment, and he threatens to eat me up if I do not give him work." Just then the ghost arrived, saying, "I'll eat you up," and he would have swallowed the man. The man began to shake, and begged the sage to save his life. The sage said ;—"I will find you a way out. Look at that dog with a curly tail. Draw your sword quickly and cut the tail off and give it to the ghost to straighten out." The man cut off the dog's tail and gave it to the ghost, saying, "Straighten that out for me." The ghost took it and slowly and carefully straightened it out, but as soon as he let it

go, it instantly curled up again. Once more he laboriously straightened it out, only to find it again curled up as soon as he attempted to let go of it. Again he patiently straightened it out, but as soon as he let it go, it curled up again. So he went on for days and days, until he was exhausted, and said, "I was never in such trouble before in my life. I am an old veteran ghost, but never before was I in souch trouble. I will make a compromise with you," he said to the man. "You let me off and I will let you keep all I have given you and will promise not to harm you." The man was much pleased, and accepted the offer gladly.

This world is that dog's curly tail, and people have been striving to straighten it out, each in his own way, for hundreds of years; but when they let it go, it has curled up again. How can it be otherwise? One must first know how to work without attachment, then he will not be a fanatic. When we know that this world is like a dog's curly tail and will never get straightened in the way we want, we shall not become fanatics. There are fanatics of various kinds, wine fanatics, cigar fanatics and so on.

There was a young lady once in this class. She is one of a number of ladies in Chicago who have built a house into which they take the working people and give them some music and gymnastics. One day this young lady was talking to me about the evils of drinking and smoking and so on, and told me that she knew the remedy for it all. I asked her what it was, and she said, "Don't you know the Hall House?" Evidently in her opinion this Hall House is a great panacea, for all the evils that human flesh is heir to. There are some fanatics in India who think that, if a woman is allowed to have two or three husbands, it will cure all evil. All this is fanaticism and wise men will never be fanatics. They can never do real work. If there were no fanaticism in the world, it would make much more progress than it does now. It is all silly nonsense to think that fanaticism makes for the progress of mankind. It is, instead, a retarding block, because it rouses hatred and anger, and causes people to fight against each other, and makes them unsympathetic. We think that whatever we do or possess is the best thing in the world, and that those

things which we do not do or possess are of no value. So, always remember this curly tail of the dog whenever you have a tendency to become a fanatic. You need not worry yourself sleepless about the world; it will go on in spite of you. The Lord God is its Governor and Maintainer, and in spite of wine fanatics and cigar fanatics and all sorts of marriage fanatics, the world will go on under His care. When you have avoided fanaticism, then alone will you work well. It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgment and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love, who does good work and so does good to himself. The fanatic is foolish and has no sympathy; he can never straighten the world, nor himself become pure and perfect.

Do you not remember the "Mayflower" people in your own history, and how they came to this land as Puritans? In the beginning they were very pure and good, but very soon they too began to persecute other people. It is the the same everywhere in the history of humanity; even those that run away from persecution indulge in persecuting others as soon as a favourable

opportunity to do so turns up. I have read of two wonderful ships. The first is Noah's Ark and the second is the "Mayflower." The Jews hold that the whole of creation has come out of Noah's Ark and the Americans say that out of the "Mayflower" nearly half the world has come. I scarcely meet one in this country who does not say, "My grand-father or great-grand-father came out of the *Mayflower*." This is fanaticism of another sort. In ninety cases out of a hundred fanatics must have had livers, or they are dyspeptics, or they are in some way diseased. By and by even physicians will find out that fanaticism is a kind of disease. I have seen plenty of it—Lord save me from it!

My experience has become condensed in this form, namely, that we should keep away from all sorts of fanatical reforms. Do you mean to say that the wine fanatics love the poor fellows who become drunkards? Fanatics are fanatics because they expect to get something for themselves out of the fanaticism. As soon as the battle is over, they go in for the spoil. As soon as you come out of the company of fanatics you learn how to

really to love and sympathise. It will become possible for you to sympathise with the drunkard and to know that he also is a man like you. You will then try to understand the many circumstances that are dragging him down, and feel that if you had been in his place you would perhaps have committed suicide. I remember a woman whose husband is a great drunkard complaining to me of his drunkenness. I am convinced that a large proportion of drunkards are manufactured by their wives. My business is to tell the truth and not to flatter any one. Those unruly women from whose minds the words *bear* and *forbear* are gone for ever, and whose false ideas of independence lead them to say that they want men to be down under their feet, and who begin to screatch and howl as soon as men dare to say anything to them which they do not like—such women are becoming the bane of the world, and it is a wonder that they do not drive half the men in it to commit suicide. These women get their half-starved preachers to side with them, and say to them, "Ladies, you are the most wonderful beings ever made." Then the women declare about

every one of such preachers, "This is the preacher for us," and give them money and other things. It is in this way that things are going on. Life is not such a joke as that; it is a little more serious.

Let me ask you now to remember the chief points in to-day's lecture. Firstly, we have to bear in mind that we are all debtors to the world and that the world does not owe to us anything. It is a great privilege for all of us to be allowed to do anything for the world. In helping the world we really help ourselves. The second point to remember is that there is a God in this universe. It is not true that this universe is drifting about standing in need of help from you and from me. God is ever present therein, He is undying and eternally active and infinitely watchful. When the whole universe sleeps, He sleeps not; He is working incessantly; all the changes and manifestations of the world are His. Thirdly, we ought not to hate any one. This world will always continue to be a mixture of good and evil. Our duty is to sympathise with the weak and to love even the wrong-doer. The world is a grand moral gymna-

sium wherein we have all to take exercise, so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually. Fourthly, we ought not to be fanatics of any kind, because fanaticism is opposed to love. You hear fanatics glibly saying, "I do not hate the sinner, I hate the sin;" but I am prepared to go any distance to see the face of that man who can really make a distinction between the sin and the sinner. It is easy to say so. If we can distinguish well between quality and substance we may become perfect men. It is not easy to *do* this. And further, the calmer we are and the less disturbed our nerves, the more shall we love and the better will our work be.

CHAPTER VI.

Non-Attachment is Complete Self-Abnegation.

Just as every action that emanates from us comes back to us in reaction, even so our actions may act on other people and theirs may act on us. Perhaps all of you have observed it as a fact that when persons do evil actions they become more and more

evil, and when they begin to do good they become stronger and stronger and learn to do good at all times. This intensification of the influence of action cannot be explained on any other ground, than that we can act and react upon each other. To take an illustration from physical science, when I am doing a certain action, my mind may be said to be in a certain state of vibration; all minds which are in similar circumstances will have the tendency to be affected by my mind. If there are different musical instruments tuned alike in one room, all of you may have noticed that when one is struck, the others have the tendency to vibrate so as to give the same note. So in this illustration, it may be seen that the instruments had all the same tension and were affected alike by the same impulse. All minds that have the same tension, so to say, will be equally affected by the same thought. Of course, this influence of thought on mind will vary, according to distance and other causes, but the mind is always open to be affected. Suppose I am doing an evil act, my mind is in a certain state of vibration, and all minds in the universe, which are in

a similar state, have the possibility of being affected by the vibration of my mind. So, when I am doing a good action, my mind is in another state of vibration; and all minds similarly strung have the possibility of being affected by my mind; and this power of mind is more or less according as the force of the tension is a greater or less.

Following this simile further, it is quite possible that, just as light waves may travel for millions of years before they reach any object, so thought waves may also travel hundreds of years before they meet an object which will vibrate in unison with them. It is quite possible, therefore, that this atmosphere of ours is full of such thought pulsations, both of good and evil. Every thought projected from every brain goes on pulsating, as it were, until it meets a fit object that will receive it. Any mind which is open to receive some of these impulses will receive them immediately. So, when a man is doing evil actions, he has brought his mind to a certain state of tension; and all the waves which correspond to that state of tension, and which may be said to be already in the atmosphere, will

struggle to enter into his mind. That is why an evil-doer generally goes on doing more and more evil. His actions become intensified. Such, also, will be the case with the doer of good; he will open himself to all the good waves that are in the atmosphere, and his good actions also will become intensified. We run, therefore, a twofold danger in doing evil; first, we open ourselves to all the evil influences surrounding us; secondly, we create evil which will affect others. It may be possible that our evil actions will affect others hundreds of years hence. In doing evil we injure ourselves and others also. In doing good we do good to ourselves and to others as well; and, like all other forces in man, these forces of good and evil also gather strength from outside.

According to *Karma-Yoga*, the action any man has done cannot be destroyed, until it has borne its fruit; no power in nature can stop it from yielding its results. If I do an evil action, I must suffer for it; there is no power in this universe to stop or stay it. Similarly if I do a good action, there is no power in the universe which can

stop its bearing good results. The cause must have its effect; nothing can prevent or restrain this. Now comes a very fine and serious matter for consideration about *Karma-Yoga* namely, that these actions of ours, both good and evil, are all intimately connected with each other. We cannot put a line of demarcation and say, this action is entirely good and this entirely evil. There is no action which does not bear good and evil fruits at the same time. To take the nearest example: I am talking to you, and some of you, perhaps, think I am doing good; and at the same time I am, perhaps, killing thousands of microbes in the atmosphere; I am thus doing evil to something else. There cannot be any action of man's which is either entirely good or entirely evil. When the action is very near to us and affects those we know, we say that it is very good action, provided it affects them in a good manner. For instance, you may call my speaking to you very good, but the microbes will not; the microbes you do not see, but yourselves you do see. The way in which my talk affects you is obvious to you, but how it affects the microbes is not so

obvious. And so, if we analyse our evil actions also we may find that some good possibly results from them somewhere. "He who in good action sees that there is something evil in it, and in the midst of evil sees that there is something good in it somewhere, —he has known the secret of work."

But what is it that follows from this? It is this conclusion—that, howsoever we may try, there cannot be any action which is perfectly pure, or any which is perfectly impure, taking purity and impurity in the sense of injury and non-injury. We cannot breathe or live without injuring others, and every bit of the food we eat is taken away from another's mouth: our very lives are crowding out other lives. So says the *Bhagvad-Gitta.* It may be men, or animals, or small microbes, but some one or other of these we have to crowd out. That being the case, it naturally follows that a thoroughly harmless perfection can never be attained in relation to any work. We may work through all eternity, but there will be no way out of this intricate maze; you may work on, and on, and on; there will be no end to this inevitable asso-

ciation of good and evil in the results of work.

The second point to consider is, what is the end of work? We find the vast majority of people in every country believing that there will be a time when this world will become perfect, when there will be no disease or death, or unhappiness, or wickedness. That is a very good idea, a very good motive power to inspire and uplift the ignorant; but if we think for a moment we shall find on the very face of it that it cannot be so. How can it be, seeing that good and bad are the obverse and reverse of the same coin? How can you have good without evil at the same time? What is meant by perfection? A perfect life is almost a contradiction in terms. Life itself is a state of continous struggle between ourselves and everything outside. Every moment we are fighting actually with external nature, and if we are defeated our life has to go. It is, for instance, a continuous struggle for food and air. If food or air fails we die. Life is not a simple and smoothly flowing thing, but it is a compound effect. This complex struggle between something inside and the external world is what

we call life. So, it is clear on the very face of it that, when this struggle ceases, there will be an end of life.

What is meant by ideal happiness is that, when it is attained, this struggle will cease altogether. But then life will cease, and the struggle can only cease when life itself has ceased. Then again, before we attain even one-thousandth part of this ideal happiness this earth will have greatly cooled down, and we shall not be. So this millennium cannot be in this world, although it may be anywhere else. We have seen already that in helping the world we help ourselves. The main effect of work done for others is to purify ourselves. By means of the constant effort to do good to others we are trying to forget ourselves ; this forgetfulness of self is the one great lesson we have to learn in life. Man thinks foolishly that he can make himself happy, and after years of struggle finds out at last that true happiness consists in killing selfishness and that no one can make him happy except himself. Every act of charity, every thought of sympathy, every action of help, every good deed, is taking so much of

self-importance away from our little selves and making us think of ourselves as the lowest and the least; and, therefore, it is all good. Here we find that *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, and *Karma*, all come to one point. The highest ideal is eternal and entire self-abnegation, where there is no "I," but all is "thou"; and whether he is conscious, or unconscious of it *Karma-Yoga* leads man to that end. A religious preacher may become horrified at the idea of an impersonal God; he may insist on a personal God and wish to keep up his own identity and individuality whatever he may mean by that. But his ideas of ethics, if they are really good, cannot but be based on the highest self-abnegation. It is the basis of all morality; you may extend it to men, or animals, or angels, it is the one basic idea, the one fundamental principle running through all ethical systems.

You will find various classes of men in this world. First, there are the God-men, whose self-abnegation is complete, and who do only good to others even at the sacrifice of their own lives. These are the highest of men. If there are a hundred of such in

any country, that country need never despair. But they are unfortunately too few. Then there are the good men who do good to others so long as it does not injure themselves; and there is a third class, the diabolical people, who, to do good to themselves, injure others. It is said by a Sanskrit poet that there is a fourth unnameable class of people who injure others merely for injury's sake. Just as there are at one pole of existence the highest good men, who do good for the sake of doing good, so, at the other pole, there are others who will injure others just for the sake of the injury. They do not gain anything thereby, but it is their nature to do evil. We thus see that, according to our poet, the man who sacrifices himself to do good to others, the man with the highest self-abnegation, is really the greatest man.

Here are two Sanskrit words. One is "Pravritti," which means revolving towards, and the other is "Nivritti," which means revolving away. The "revolving towards" is what we call the world, and "I and mine;" it includes all those things which are always enriching that "me" by wealth and money

and power, and name, and fame and which are of a grasping nature, always tending to accumulate everything in one centre, that centre being "myself." That is the "pravritti," the natural tendency of every human being; taking everything from every where and heaping it around one centre, that centre being man's own sweet self. When this tendency begins to break, when it is "nivritti" or "going away from," then begin morality and religion. Both "pravritti," and "nivritti" are of the nature of work, the former is evil work, and the latter is good work. This "nivritti" is the fundamental basis of all morality and all religion, and the very perfection of it is entire self-abnegation, readiness to sacrifice mind and body and everything for another being. When a man has reached that state he has attained to the perfection of *Karma-Yoga*. This is the highest result of good works. Although a man has not studied a single system of philosophy, although he does not believe in any God, and never has believed, although he has not prayed even once in his whole life, if the simple power of good actions has brought him to that state where

he is ready to give up his life and all else for others, he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through his knowledge; and so you may find that the philosopher, and the worker, and the devotee, all meet at one point, that one point being self-abnegation. However much their systems of philosophy and religion may differ all mankind stand in reverence and awe before the man who is ready to sacrifice himself for others. Here, it is not at all any question of creed, or doctrine—even men who are very much opposed to all religious ideas, when they see one of these acts of complete self-sacrifice, feel that they must revere it. Have you not seen even a most bigoted Christian, when he reads Edwin Arnold's Light of Asia," stand in reverence of Buddha, who preached no God preached nothing but self-sacrifice? The only thing is that the bigot does not know that his own end and aim in life is exactly the same as that of those from whom he differs. The worshipper, by keeping constantly before him the idea of God and a surrounding of good, comes to

the same point at last and says, "Thy will be done," and keeps nothing to himself. That is self-abnegation. The philosopher, with his knowledge, sees that the seeming self is a delusion and at once easily gives it up; it is self-abnegation. So *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Jnana* all meet here; and this is what was meant by all the great preachers of ancient times, when they taught that God is not the world. There is one thing which is the world and another which is God; and this distinction is very true; what they mean by world is selfishness. Unselfishness is God. One may live on a throne, in a golden palace, and be perfectly unselfish; and then he is in God. Another may live in a hut and wear rags, and have nothing in the world; yet, if he is selfish, he is intensely merged in the world.

To come back to one of our main points, we say that we cannot do good without at the same time doing some evil, or do evil without doing some good. Knowing this, how can we work? There have therefore been sects in this world who have in an astoundingly preposterous way preached slow suicide as the only means to get out of

the world; because, if a man lives he has to kill poor little animals and plants or do injury to something or some one. So, according to them the only way out of the world is to die; the Jainas have preached this doctrine as their highest ideal. This teaching seems to be very logical. But the true solution is found in the *Gita*. It is the theory of non-attachment, to be attached to nothing while doing our work of life. Know that you are separated entirely from the world; that you are in the world, and that whatever you may be doing in it, you are not doing that for your own sake. Any action that you do for yourself will bring its effect to bear upon you. If it is a good action you will have to take the good effect, and, if it is a bad action, you will have to take the bad effect; but any action that is not done for your own sake, whatever it be, will have no effect on you. There is to be found a very expressive sentence in our scriptures embodying this idea:—Even if he kill the whole universe (or be himself killed) he is neither the killed nor the killing, when he knows that he is not acting for himself at all." Therefore *Karma-Yoga* teaches, "Do not give up the

world; live in the world, imbibe its influences as much as you can; but if it be for your own enjoyment's sake—work not at all. Enjoyment should not be the goal. First kill yourself and then take the whole world as yourself; as the old Christians used to say "the old man must die." This old man is the selfish idea that the whole world is made for our enjoyment. Foolish parents teach their children to pray, "O Lord, thou hast created this sun for me and this moon for me," as if the Lord has had nothing else to do than to create everything for these babies. Do not teach your children such nonsense. Then again, there are people who are foolish in another way; they teach us that all these animals were created for us to kill and eat, and that this universe is for the enjoyment of men. That is all foolishness. A tiger may say, "Man was created for me," and pray, "O Lord, how wicked are these men, who do not come and place themselves before me to be eaten; they are breaking your law." If the world is created for us, we are also created for the world. That this world is created for our enjoyment is the most wicked idea that holds us down.

This world is not for our sake ; millions pass out of it every year ; the world does not feel it ; millions of others are supplied in their place. Just as much the world is for us, we are also for the world.

To work properly, therefore, you have first to give up the idea of attachment. Secondly, do not mix in the fray, hold yourself as a witness and go on working. My old master used to say, " Look upon your children as a nurse does." The nurse will take your baby and fondle it and play with it and behave towards it as gently as if it were her own child ; but as soon as you give her notice to quit, she is ready to start off with bag and baggage from the house. Everything in the shape of attachment is forgotten ; it will not give the ordinary nurse the least pang to leave your children and take up other children. Even so are you to be with all that you consider your own. You are the nurse, and, if you believe in God, believe that all these things which you consider yours are really His. The greatest weakness often insinuates itself as the greatest good and strength. It is a weakness to think that any one is dependent on me, and

that I can do good to another. This pride is the mother of all our attachment, and through this attachment comes all our pain. We must inform our minds that no one in this universe depends upon us; not one beggar depends on our charity; not one soul on our kindness; not one living thing on our help. All are helped on by nature, and will be so helped even though millions of us were not here. The course of nature will not stop for such as you and me; it is, as already pointed out, only a blessed privilege to you and to me that we are allowed, in the way of helping others, to educate ourselves. This is a great lesson to learn in life, and when we have learned it fully we shall never be unhappy; we can go and mix without harm in society anywhere and everywhere. You may have wives and husbands, and regiments of servants, and kingdoms to govern; if only you act on the principle that the world is not for you and does not inevitably need you, they can do you no harm. This very year some of your friends may have died. Is the world waiting without going on, for them to come again? Is its current stopped? No, it goes on. So drive

and thrash out of your mind the idea that you have to do something for the world ; the world does not require any help from you. It is sheer nonsense on the part of any man to think that he is born to help the world ; it is simply pride, it is selfishness insinuating itself in the form of virtue. When you have trained your mind and your muscles to realise this idea of the world's non-dependence on you or on anybody, there will then be no reaction in the form of pain resulting from work. When you give something to a man and expect nothing— do not even expect the man to be grateful—his ingratitude will not tell upon you, because you never expected anything, never thought you had any right to anything in the way of a return ; you gave him what he deserved ; his own *Karma* got it for him ; your *Karma* made you the carrier thereof. Why should you be proud of having given away something ? You are the porter that carried the money or other kind of gift, and the world deserved it by its own *Karma*. Where is then the reason for pride in you ? There is nothing very great in what you give to the world. When you have acquired

the feeling of non-attachment, there will then be neither good nor evil for you. It is only selfishness that causes the difference between good and evil. It is a very hard thing to understand, but you will come to learn in time that nothing in the universe has power over you until you allow it to exercise such a power. Nothing has power over the Self of man, until that Self becomes a fool and loses independence. So, by non-attachment, you overcome and deny the power of anything to act upon you. It is very easy to say that nothing has the right to act upon you until you allow it to do so; but what is the true sign of the man who really does not allow anything to work upon him, who is neither happy nor unhappy when acted upon by the external world? The sign is that it causes no change in his mind whether a mountain tumbles on him and crushes him to pieces, or the most blessed scenes come before him and the most blessed things happen to him; he is the same in good fortune or in bad fortune; in all conditions he continues to remain the same.

There was a great sage in India called Vyasa. This Vyasa is known as the author

of the *Vedanta* aphorisms, and was a holy man. His father had tried to become a very perfect man and had failed. His grandfather had also tried and failed. His great-grandfather had similarly tried and failed. He himself did not succeed perfectly, but his son, Suka, was born perfect. Vyasa taught his son wisdom, and, after teaching him the knowledge of truth himself, he sent him to the court of King Janaka. He was a great king and was called Janaka Videha. *Videha* means "outside the body." Although a king, he had entirely forgotten that he was a body; he felt that he was a spirit all the time. This boy Suka was sent to be taught by him. The king knew that Vyasa's son was coming to him to learn wisdom; so he made certain arrangements beforehand, and when the boy presented himself at the gates of the palace, the guards took no notice of him whatsoever. They only gave him a seat, and he sat there for three days and nights, nobody speaking to him, nobody asking him who he was or whence he was. He was the son of a very great sage; his father was honoured by the whole country, and he himself was a most respectable per-

son; yet the low, vulgar guards of the palace would take no notice of him. After that, suddenly, the ministers of the king and all the big officials came there and received him with the greatest honours. They conducted him in and showed him into splendid rooms, gave him the most fragrant baths and wonderful dresses, and for eight days they kept him there in all kinds of luxury. That solemnly serene face of Suka did not change even to the smallest extent by the change in the treatment accorded to him; he was the same in the midst of this luxury as when waiting at the door. Then he was brought before the king. The king was on his throne, music was playing, and dancing and other amusements were going on. The king then gave him a cup of milk, full to the brim, and asked him to go seven times round the hall without spilling even a drop of the milk. The boy took the cup and went on in the midst of the music and the attraction of the beautiful faces around. As desired by the king, seven times did he go round, and not a drop of the milk was spilt. The boy's mind could not be attracted by anything in the world, unless

he allowed it to affect him. And when he brought the cup to the king, the king said to him, "What your father has taught you, and what you have learned yourself, I can only repeat; you have known the truth; go home."

Thus the man that has practised control over himself cannot be acted upon by anything that is outside; there is no more slavery for him. His mind has become free; such a man alone is fit to live well in the world. We generally find men holding two opinions regarding the world. Some are pessimists and say "How horrible this world is, how wicked!" Some others are optimists and they say "How beautiful this world is, how wonderful!" To those who have not controlled their own minds, the world is either full of evil or at best a mixture of good and evil. This very world will become to us an optimistic world when we become masters of our own minds. Nothing will then work upon us as good or evil; we shall find everything to be in its proper place, to be harmonious. Some men, who begin by saying that the world is a hell, often end by saying that it is a heaven when they succeed

in the practice of self-control. If we are genuine *Karma-Yogins* and wish to train ourselves to the attainment of this state, wherever we may begin we are sure to end in perfect self-abnegation; and as soon as this seeming self has gone, the whole world, which at first appears to us to be filled with evil, will appear to be heaven itself and full of blessedness. Its very atmosphere will be blessed; every human face there will be good. Such is the end and aim of *Karma-Yoga*, and such is its perfection of practical life. Our various *Yogas* do not conflict with each other; each of them leads us to the same goal and makes us perfect; only each has to be strenuously practised. The whole secret is in practising. First you have to hear, then think, and then practise. This is true of every *Yoga*. You have first to hear about it and understand what it is; and many things which you do not understand will be made clear to you by constant hearing and thinking. It is hard to understand every thing at once. The explanation of every thing is after all in yourself. No one was ever really taught by another; each of us has to teach himself. The external

teacher offers only the suggestion which rouses the internal teacher to work to understand things. Then things will be made clear to us by our own power of perception and thought, and we shall realise them in our own souls; and that realisation will grow into the intense power of will. First it is feeling, then it becomes willing, and out of that willing comes the tremendous force for work that will go through every vein and nerve and muscle, until the whole mass of your body is changed into an instrument of the unselfish *Yoga* of work, and the desired result of perfect self-abnegation and utter unselfishness is duly attained. This attainment does not depend on any dogma, or doctrine, or belief. Whether one is Christian, or Jew, or Gentile, it does not matter. Are you unselfish? That is the question. If you are, you will be perfect without reading a single religious book, without going into a single church or temple. Each one of our *Yogas* is fitted to make man perfect even without the help of the others, because they have all the same goal in view. The *Yogas* of work, of wisdom, and of devotion are all capable of serving as direct

and independent means for the attainment of *Moksha*. "Fools alone say that work and philosophy are different, not the learned." The learned know that, though apparently different from each other, they at last lead to the same goal of human perfection.

CHAPTER VII.

Freedom.

In addition to meaning work, we have stated that psychologically the word *Karma* also implies causation. Any work, any action, any thought that produces an effect is called a *Karma*. Thus the law of *Karma* means the law of causation, of inevitable cause and sequence. Wheresoever there is a cause, there an effect must be produced; this necessity cannot be resisted, and this law of *Karma*, according to our philosophy, is true throughout the whole universe. Whatever we see, or feel, or do; whatever action there is anywhere in the universe; while being the effect of past work on the one hand, it becomes, on the other hand, a cause in its turn, and produces its own effect. It is necessary, together with this, to consider

what is meant by the word law. We may see psychologically that by law is meant the tendency of a series to repeat itself. When we see one event followed by another, or sometimes happening simultaneously with another, we expect this sequence or co-existence to recur. Our old logicians and philosophers of the *Nyaya* school call this law by the name of *Vyapti*. According to them all our ideas of law are due to association. A series of phenomena becomes associated with things in our mind in a sort of invariable order, so that whatever we perceive at any time is immediately referred to other facts in the mind. Any one idea or, according to our psychology, any one wave that is produced in the mind-stuff, *chitta*, must always give rise to many other waves. This is the psychological idea of association, and causation is only an aspect of this grand and pervasive principle of association. This pervasiveness of association is what is, in Sanskrit, called *Vyapti*. In the external world the idea of law is the same as in the internal world—the expectation that a particular phenomenon will be followed by another, and that the series will repeat itself

so far as we can see. Really speaking, therefore, law does not exist in nature. Practically it is an error to say that gravitation exists in the earth, or that there is any law existing objectively anywhere in nature. Law is the method, the manner in which our mind grasps a series of phenomena; it is all in the mind. Certain phenomena happening one after another or together, and followed by the conviction of the regularity of their recurrence, thus enabling our minds to grasp the method of the whole series, constitute what we call law.

The next question for consideration is what we mean by law being universal. Our universe is that portion of existence which is characterised by what the Sanskrit psychologists call *desa-kala-nimitta*, or what is known to European psychology as *space, time*, and *causation*. This universe is only one part of infinite existence; one part which is thrown into a peculiar mould, or is composed of space, time, and causation. That part of the sum total of existence which fills this mould is what forms our universe. It necessarily follows that law is possible only within this conditioned universe; beyond that

there can not be any law. When we speak of this universe, we only mean that portion of existence which is limited by our mind ; the universe of the senses, that which we can see, feel, touch, hear, think of, imagine ; that universe alone is under law ; but, beyond that, existence cannot be subject to law, because causatson does not extend beyond the world of our minds. Anything beyond the range of our mind and our sense is not bound by the law of causation, as there is no mental association of things in the region beyond the senses, and no causation without association of ideas. It is only when "being" or existence gets moulded into name and form that it obeys the law of causation, and is said to be under law ; because all law has its essence in causation. Therefore, we see at once that there cannot be any such thing as free will ; the very words are a contradiction, because will is what we know, and everything that we know is within our universe, and everything within our universe is moulded by the conditions of space, time, and causation. Everything that we know, or can possibly know, must be subject to causation, and that which

obeys the law of causation cannot be free. It is acted upon by other agents, and becomes a cause in its turn. But that, which has become converted into the will, which was not the will before, but which, when it fell into this mould of space, time and causation became converted into the human will, is free; and when this will gets out of this mould of space, time and causation, it will be free again. From freedom it comes, and becomes moulded into this bondage, and it gets out and goes back to freedom again.

The question has been raised as to from whom this universe comes, in whom it rests, and to whom it goes; and the answer has been given that from freedom it comes, and rests in bondage, and goes back into that freedom again. So, when we speak of man as no other than that infinite being who is manifesting himself, we mean that only one very small part thereof is man; this body and this mind which we see are only one part of the whole, only one spot of the infinite being. This whole universe is only one speck of the infinite being, and all our laws, and our bondages, our joys and our sorrows, our happinesses, and our expecta-

tions, are only within this small universe, all our progression and digression are within its small compass. So you see how childish it is to expect a continuation of this universe, the creation of our minds, and to expect and hope to go to heaven, which after all must mean only a repetition of this world that we know. You see at once that it is an impossible and childish desire to make the whole of infinite existence conform to the limited and conditioned existence which we know. So, when a man says that he will have again and again this same thing which he is having now, or, as I sometimes put it, when he asks for a *comfortable* religion, you may know that he has become so degenerate that he cannot think of anything higher than what he is now; he is just his little present surroundings and nothing more. He has forgotten his infinite nature, and his whole idea is confined to these little joys and sorrows, and heart-jealousies of the moment. He thinks that this finite thing is the infinite; and not only so, he will not let this foolishness go. He clings on desperately unto *Thrishnâ*, the thirst after life, what the Buddhists call *Tanha* and *Trissá*. There

may be millions of kinds of happiness, and beings, and laws and progress, and causation, all acting outside the little universe that we know, and after all the whole of this comprises but one section of our nature.

To acquire freedom we have to get beyond the limitations of this universe; it cannot be found here. Perfect equilibrium or what the Christians call the peace that passeth all understanding cannot be had in this universe, nor in heaven, nor in any place where our mind and thoughts can go, where the senses can feel, or which the imagination can conceive. No such place can give us that freedom, because all such places would be within our universe, and it is limited by space, time and causation. There may be places that are more etherial than this earth of ours, where enjoyments may be keener, but even those places must be in the universe, and therefore in bondage to law; so we have to go beyond, and real religion begins there where this little universe ends. These little joys, and sorrows, and knowledge of things end there, and the reality begins. Until we give up the thirst after life, the strong attachment to this our

transient conditioned existence, we have no hope of catching even a glimpse of that infinite freedom beyond. It stands to reason then that there is only one way to attain to that freedom which is the goal of all the noblest aspirations of mankind, and that one way is by giving up this little life, giving up this little universe, giving up this earth, giving up heaven, giving up the body, giving up the mind, giving up everything that is limited and conditioned. If we give up our attachments to this little universe of the senses, or of the mind, immediately we shall be free. The only way to come out of bondage is to go beyond the limitations of law, to go beyond where causation prevails.

But it is a most difficult thing to give up the clinging to this universe; few ever attain to that. There are two ways to do that, mentioned in our books. One is called the "neti neti", not this, not this, the other is called the "iti iti"; the former is the negative and the latter the positive. The negative way is the most difficult. It is only possible to the men of the very highest exceptional minds and gigantic wills

who simply stand up and say, "No, I will not have this," and the mind and body obey their will, and they come out successful. But such people are very rare, the vast majority of mankind choose the positive way, the way through the world, making use of all the bondages themselves to break those very bondages. This is also a kind of giving up; only it is done slowly and gradually, by knowing things, enjoying things, and thus obtaining experience, and knowing the nature of things, until the mind lets them all go at last and becomes unattached. The former way of obtaining non-attachment is by reasoning, and the latter way is through work and experience. The first is the path of *Jnana-Yoga*, and is characterised by the refusal to do any building work; the second is that of *Karma-Yoga*, in which there is no cessation from doing work. Every one must work in the universe. Only those who are perfectly satisfied with the Self, whose desires do not go beyond the Self, whose mind never strays out of the Self, to whom the Self is all in all, only those do not work. The rest must all work. A current rushing down freely in

accordance with its own nature falls into a hollow and makes a whirlpool, and, after running round and round a little in that whirlpool, it emerges again in the form of the free current to go on unchecked. Each human life is like that current. It gets into the whirl, gets involved in this world of space, time, and causation, there whirls round a little, crying out my father, my brother, my name, my fame, and so on, and at last emerges out of it and regains its original freedom. The whole universe is doing that. Whether we know it or not, whether we are conscious or unconscious of it, we are all working to get out of the dream of the world. Man's experience in the world is to enable him to get out of its whirlpool.

But what is *Karma-Yoga* ? It is the knowledge of the secret of work. We see that the whole universe is working. For what does it do so ? For salvation, for liberty ; consciously or unconsciously every thing from the smallest atom to the highest being is working for that ; working with the one aim of obtaining liberty for the mind, for the body, for the spirit, and for

everything; all things are always trying to get freedom, they are flying away from bondage. The sun, the moon, the earth, the planets, all are trying to fly away from bondage. The centrifugal and the centripetal forces of nature are indeed typical of our universe. *Karma-Yoga* tells us the secret and the method of work. Instead of our being knocked about in this universe, and after long delay and thrashing, getting to know things as they are, *Karma-Yoga* teaches us the secret of work, the method of work, the organizing power of work. A vast mass of energy may be spent in vain, if we do not know how to use and utilise it. *Karma-Yoga* makes a science of work, you learn by it how best to utilise all the workings of this world. Work is inevitable, it must be so; but we have work to the highest purpose. *Karma-Yoga* makes us admit that this world is a world of merely five minutes; that it is a something we have inevitably to pass through; and that freedom is not here, but is only to be found beyond. To find the way out of the bondages of the world we have to go through it slowly and surely. There may be those

exceptional persons about whom I just spoke, those who can stand aside and give up the world, as a snake casts off its skin and stands aside and looks at it; there are no doubt, some of these exceptional beings; but the rest of mankind have to go slowly through the world of work and *Karma-Yogâ* shows us the process, the secret and the method of doing so to the best advantage of all concerned.

What does it say? "Work incessantly, but give up all attachment to work." Do not identify yourself with anything. Hold your mind free. All this that you see, the pains and the miseries, are but the necessary conditions of this world; poverty and wealth and happiness are but momentary; they do not belong to our real nature at all. Our nature is far beyond misery or happiness, beyond every object of the senses, beyond the imagination; and yet we must go on working all the time. "Misery comes through attachment, not through work." As soon as we identify ourselves with the work we do, we feel miserable; but if we do not identify ourselves with it we do not feel that misery. If a beautiful picture belong-

ing to another is burnt, a man does not generally become very miserable ; but when his own picture is burnt, how miserable he feels ! Why ? Both were beautiful pictures, perhaps copies of the same original ; but in one case very much more misery is felt than in the other. It is because in one case he identifies himself with the picture, and not in the other. This "I and mine" causes the whole misery. With the sense of possession came selfishness, and selfishness brought on misery. Every act of selfishness or thought of selfishness makes us attached to something, and immediately we are made slaves. Each wave in the "chitta" that says "I and mine," immediately puts a chain round us and makes us slaves ; and the more we say, "I and mine", the more slavery grows, the more misery increases. Therefore, *Karma-Yoga* tells us to enjoy the beauty of all the pictures in the world, but not to identify ourselves with any or all of them. Never say "mine." Whenever we say a thing is mine, misery will immediately come. Do not even say "my child" in your mind. Possess the child, but do not say "mine." If you do, then will come the

misery. Do not say "my house," do not say "my body." The whole difficulty is there. The body is neither yours nor mine nor anybody's. These bodies are coming and going by the laws of nature, but we are free, standing as witness. This body is no more free than a picture, or a wall. Why should we be attached so much to a body? If somebody paints a picture, he does it and afterwards passes away. Why should he be attached to it? Let it pass. Do not project that tentacle of selfishness, "I must possess it." As soon as that is projected, misery will begin.

So *Karma-Yoga* says, First destroy the tendency to project this tentacle of selfishness, and, when you have the power of checking that, hold it in and do not allow the mind to get into that sort of the wave of selfishness. Then you may go out into the world and work as much as you can. Mix everywhere; go where you please; you will never be polluted or contaminated with evil. There is the lotus leaf in the water; the water cannot touch and adhere to it; so will you be in the world. This is called "vairagya," dispassion or the non-attachment

of *Karma-Yoga.* I believe I have told you that without non-attachment there cannot be any kind of *Yoga.* Non-attachment is the basis of all the *Yogas.* The man who gives up living in houses, and wearing fine clothes, and eating good food, and goes into the desert, may be a most attached person. His only possession, his own body, may become everything to him ; and as he lives he will be simply struggling for the sake of his body. Non-attachment does not mean anything that we may do in relation to our external body, but it is all in the mind. The binding link of "I and mine" is in the body. If we have not this link with the body and with the things of the senses, we are non-attached, wherever and whatever we may be. A man be on a throne and perfectly non-attached ; another man may be in rags and still very much attached. First, we have to attain this state of non-attachment, and then to work incessantly. *Karma-Yoga* gives us the method that will help us in giving up all attachment. It is indeed a hard thing to give up attachment.

Here are the two ways of giving up all attachment in *Karma-Yoga.* One way is

for those who do not believe in God, or in any outside help. They are left to their own devices; they have simply to work with their own will, with the power of their mind, saying "I must be non-attached," and work too with their own power of *Viveká* or discrimination. For those who believe in God there is the other way, which is much less difficult to go through. They give up the fruits of work unto the Lord, they work and are never attached to the results. Whatever they see, feel, hear, or do, is for Him. Whatever good work we may do, let us not claim any praise to ourselves. The work is the Lord's; we have to give up the fruits unto Him. The grandest work that we may do in our lives never let us think that we are to receive the benefits thereof, or that we have done any good work at all. All work is His. Let us stand aside and think that we are only servants obeying the Lord, our master, and that every impulse for action comes from him every moment. "Whatever thou worshippest, whatever thou perceivest, whatever doest, give up all unto him and be at rest. Let us be at peace, perfect peace, with ourselves, and give up our

whole body and mind and everything as an eternal sacrifice unto the Lord. Instead of the old sacrifice of pouring oblations into the fire, perform this one great sacrifice day and night - the sacrifice of your little self.- "In search of wealth in this world, thou art the only wealth I have found ; I sacrifice myself unto Thee. In search of some one to be loved, Thou art the only one beloved I have found ; I sacrifice myself unto Thee." Let us repeat this day and night and say, "Nothing for me ; no matter whether the thing is good, bad, or indifferent ; I do not care for it ; I sacrifice all unto Thee." Day and night let us renounce our seeming self until it becomes a habit with us to do so, until it gets into the blood, the nerves and the brain, and the whole body is every moment obedient to this idea of self-renunciation. Go then into the midst of the battle field, with the roaring cannon and the din of war, and you will find yourself to be free and at peace.

Karma-Yoga teaches us that the ordinary idea of duty is on the lower plane ; nevertheless, all of us have to do our duty. Yet we may see that this peculiar sense of duty is

very often a great cause of misery. Duty becomes a disease with us; drags us ever forward. It catches hold of us and makes our whole life miserable. It is the bane of human life. "This duty, this idea of duty is the mid-day summer sun which scorches the innermost soul of mankind." Look at those poor slaves to duty. Duty leaves them no time to say prayers, no time to bathe. Duty is ever on them. They go out and work. Duty is on them! They come home and think of the work for the next day. Duty is on them! It is living a slave's life, at last dropping down in the street and dying in harness, like a horse. This is duty as it is understood. The only true duty is to be unattached and to work as free beings, to give up all work unto God. All our duties are His. Blessed are we that we are ordered out here. We serve our time; whether we do it ill or well, who knows? If we do it well, we do not get the fruits. If we do it ill, neither do we get the care. Be at rest, be free, and work. This kind of freedom is a very hard thing to attain. How easy it is to interpret slavery as duty—the morbid attachment of flesh for flesh as duty! Me

go out into the world and struggle and fight for money or for any other thing to which they feel an attachment. Ask them why they do it. They say :—"It is a duty" It is the absurd greed for gold and gain, and they try to cover it with a few flowers.

What is duty after all ? It is really the impulsation of the flesh, of our attachment ; and when an attachment has become established, we call it duty. For instance, in countries where there is no marriage, there is no duty between husband and wife ; when marriage comes, husband and wife live together on account of attachment ; and that kind of living together becomes settled after generations ; and when it becomes so settled, it becomes a duty. It is, so to say, a sort of chronic disease. When it is acute we call it disease, when it is chronic we call it nature. It *is* a disease. So when attachment becomes chronic, we Baptize it with the high-sounding name of duty. We strew flowers upon it, trumpets sound for it, sacred texts are said over it, and then the whole world fights, and men earnestly rob each other for this duty's sake. Duty is good to the extent that it

checks brutality. To the lowest kinds of men, who cannot have any other ideal, it is of some good; but those who want to be *Karma-Yogins* must throw even this idea of duty overboard. There is no duty for you and me. Whatever you have to give to the world, do give by all means, but not as a duty. Do not take any thought of that. Be not compelled. Why should you be compelled? *Every thing that you do under compulsion goes to build up attachment.* Why should you have any duty? "Resign every thing unto God." "In this tremendous fiery furnace where the fire of duty scorches everybody, drink this cup of nectar and be happy." We are all simply working out His will, and have nothing to do with rewards and punishments. If you want the reward, you must also have the punishment; the only way to get out of the punishment is to give up the reward. The only way of getting out of misery is by giving up the idea of happiness, because these two are inseparably linked to each other. On one side there is happiness, on the other there is misery. On one side there is life, on the other there is death. The only way to get beyond death is to give up

the love of life. Life and death are the same thing, looked at from different points. So the idea of happiness without misery, or of life without death, is very good for school boys and children; but the thinker sees that it is all a contradiction in terms and gives up these oppositely related things. Seek no praise, no reward, for anything you do. No sooner do we perform a good action than we begin to desire credit for it. No sooner do we give money to some charity than we want to see our names blazoned in the papers. Misery must come as the result of such desires. The greatest men in the world have passed away unknown. The Buddhas and the Christs that we know are but second rate heroes in comparison with the greatest men of whom the world knows nothing. Hundreds of these unknown heroes have lived in every country working silently. Silently they live and silently they pass away; and in time their thoughts find expression in Buddhas or Christs, and it is these latter that become known to us. The highest men do not seek to get any name or fame from their knowledge. They leave their ideas to the world; they put forth no

claims for themselves and establish no schools or systems in their name. Their whole nature shrinks from such a thing. They are the pure *Sâttvikas*, who can never make any stir, but only melt down in love. I have seen one such *Yogin* who lives in a cave in India. He is one of the most wonderful men I have ever seen. He has so altogether lost the sense of his own individuality that we may say that the man in him is completely gone, leaving behind only the all comprehending sense of the divine. If an animal bites one of his arms, he is ready to give it his other arm also, and say that it is the Lord's will. Everything that comes to him is from the Lord. He does not shew himself to men, and yet he is a magazine of love and of true and sweet ideas.

Next in order come the men with more *Rajas*, or activity, combative natures, who take up the ideas of the perfect ones and preach them to the world. The highest kind of men silently collect true and noble ideas, and others—the Buddhas and Christs go from place to place preaching them and working for them. In the life of Gautama Buddha we notice him constantly saying

that he is the twenty-fifth Buddha. The twenty-four before him are unknown to history, although the Buddha known to History must have built upon foundations laid by them. The highest men are calm, silent and unknown. They are the men who really know the power of thought; they are sure that, even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live through eternity. Indeed such thoughts will penetrate through the mountains and cross the oceans, and travel through the world, and will enter deep into human hearts and brains and raise up men and women who will give them practical expression in the workings of human life. These *Sattvikâ* men are too near the Lord to be active and to fight, to be working, struggling, preaching, and doing good, as they say, here on earth to humanity. The active workers, however good, have still a little remnant of ignorance left in them. When our nature has yet some impurities left in it, then alone can we work. It is in the nature of work to be impelled ordinarily by motive and by attachment. In the

presence of an ever-active providence and before God who notes even the sparrows fall, how can man attach any importance to his own work? Will it not be a blasphemy to do so when we know that he is taking care of the minutest things in the world. We have only to stand in awe and reverence before him saying "Thy will be done." The highest men cannot work, for to them there is no attachment. "Those whose whole soul is gone into the Self, those whose desires are confined in the Self, who have become ever associated with the Self, for them there is no work." Such are indeed the highest of mankind; but apart from them every one else has to work. In so working we should never think that we can help on even the least thing in this universe. We can not. We only help ourselves in this gymnasium of the world. This is the proper attitude of work. If we work in this way, if we always remember that our present opportunity to work thus is a privilege which has been given to us, we shall never be attached to anything. Millions like you and me think that they are great people in the world; but we all die, and in five minutes the world

will have forgotten us. But the life of God is infinite. "Who can live a moment, breath a moment, if this all-powerful One does not will it?" He *is* the ever active Providence. All power is His and within His command. Through His command the winds blow, the sun shines, the earth lives, and death stalks upon the earth. He is the all in all; He is all and in all. We can only worship Him. Give up all fruits of work; do good for its own sake; then alone will come perfect non-attachment. The bonds of the heart will thus break, and we shall reap perfect freedom. This freedom is indeed the goal of *Karma-Yoga.*

CHAPTER VIII.

The ideal of Karma-Yoga.

The grandest idea in the religion of the *Vedanta* is that we may reach the same goal by different paths; and these paths I have generalized into four—viz, those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and

quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. But according to the type which prevails we name the divisions. It is not that you cannot find a man who has no other faculty than that of work, nor that you cannot find men who are more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are not men who have more than mere knowledge. These divisions are made in accordance with the type or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man. We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and only one goal.

I have already tried to point out that goal. It is freedom as I understand it. Everything that we perceive around us is struggling towards freedom, from the atom to the man, from the insentient, lifeless particle of matter to the highest existence on earth, the human soul. The whole universe is in fact the result of this struggle for freedom. In all combinations every particle is trying to go on its own way, to fly from the other particles; but the others are holding it in check. Our earth is try-

ing to fly away from the sun, and the moon from the earth. Everything has a tendency to infinite dispersion. All that we see in the universe has for its basis this one struggle towards freedom; it is under the impulse of this tendency that the saint prays and the robber robs. When the line of action taken is not a proper one we call it evil, and when the manifestation of it is proper and high we call it good. But the impulse is the same, the struggle towards freedom. The saint is oppressed with the knowledge of his condition of bondage, and he wants to get rid of it; so he worships God. The thief is oppressed with the idea that he does not possess certain things, and he tries to get rid of that want, to obtain freedom from it; so he steals. Freedom is the one goal of all nature, sentient or insentient; and consciously or unconsciously, everything is struggling towards that goal. The freedom which the saint seeks is very different from that which the robber seeks; the freedom loved by the saint leads him to the enjoyment of infinite unspeakable bliss, while that on which the robber has set his heart only forges other bonds for his soul.

There is to be found in every religion the manifestation of this struggle towards freedom. It is the groundwork of all morality, of unselfishness, which means getting rid of the idea that men are the same as their little body. When we see a man doing good work, helping others, it means that that man cannot be confined within the limited circle of "me and mine." There is no limit to this getting out of selfishness. All the great systems of ethics preach absolute unselfishness as the goal. Supposing this absolute unselfishness can be reached by a man, what becomes of that man? He is no more the little Mr. So-and-So; he has acquired infinite expansion. That little personality which he had before is now lost for him for ever; he has become infinite, and the attainment of his infinite expansion is indeed the goal of all religions and of all moral and philosophical teachings. The personalist, when he hears this idea philosophically put, gets frightened. At the same time, if he preaches morality, he after all teaches the very same idea himself. He puts no limit to the unselfishness of man. Suppose a man becomes perfectly unselfish

under the personalistic system, how are we to distinguish him from the perfected ones in other systems? He has become one with the universe, and to become that is the goal of all; only the poor personalist has not the courage to follow out his own reasoning to its right conclusion. *Karma-Yoga* is the attaining of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action, therefore, retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal; that is why the only definition that can be given of morality is this:—*That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.*

But, if you come to details, the matter will not be seen to be quite so simple. For instance, environment often makes the details different as I have already mentioned. The same action under one set of circumstances may be unselfish, and under another set quite selfish. So we can give only a general definition, and leave the details to be worked out by taking into consideration the differences in time, place and circumstance. In one country one kind of conduct is considered moral, and in another the very same

is immoral, because the circumstances differ. The goal of all nature is freedom, and freedom is to be attained only by perfect unselfishness; every action, thought, word or deed that is unselfish takes us towards the goal, and, as such, is called moral. That definition, you will find, holds good in every religion and every system of ethics. In some systems of thought, morality is derived from a Superior Being—God. If you ask why a man ought to do this and not that, their answer is, "Because such is the command of God." But whatever be the source from which it is derived, their code of ethics also has the same central idea—not to think of self but to give up self. And yet some persons, in spite of this high ethical idea, are frightened at the thought of having to give up their little personalities. We may ask the man who clings to the idea of little personalities to consider the case of a person who has become perfectly unselfish, who has no thought for himself, who does no deed for himself, who speaks no word for himself, and then say where his "himself" is. That "himself" is known to him only so long as he thinks, acts or speaks for himself. If

he is only conscious of others, of the universe, and of the all, where is his "himself"? It is gone for ever.

Karma-Yoga, therefore, is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness, and by good works. The *Karma-Yogin* need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the *Jnanin* applies his reason and inspiration and the *Bhakta* his love.

Now comes the next question. What is this work? What is this doing good to the world? Can we do good to the world? In an absolute sense, no; in a relative sense, yes. No permanent or everlasting good can be done to the world; if it could be done, the world would not be this world. We may satisfy the hunger of a man for five minutes, but he will be hungry again. Every

pleasure with which we supply a man may be seen to be momentary. No one can permanently cure this ever-recurring fever of pleasure and pain. Can any permanent happiness be given to the world? In the ocean we cannot raise a wave without causing a hollow somewhere else. The sum total of the good things in the world has been the same throughout in its relation to man's need and greed. It cannot be increased or decreased. Take the history of the human race as we know to-day. Do we not find the same miseries and the same happinesses, the same pleasures and pains, the same differences in position? Are not some rich, some poor, some high, some low, some healthy, some unhealthy? All this was just the same with the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans in ancient times as it is with the Americans to-day. So far as history is known, it has always been the same; yet at the same time, we find that, running along with all these incurable differences of pleasure and pain, there has ever been the struggle to alleviate them. Every period of history has given birth to thousands of men and women who have

worked hard to smooth the passage of life for others. And how far have they succeeded? We can only play at driving the ball from one place to another. We take away pain from the physical plane, and it goes to the mental one. It is like that picture in Dante's hell where the misers were given a mass of gold to roll it up a hill. Every time they rolled it up a little, it again rolled down. All our talks about the millennium are very nice as schoolboys' stories, but they are no better than that. All nations that dream of the millennium also think that, of all peoples in the world, they will have the best of it then for themselves. This is the wonderfully unselfish idea of the millennium!

We cannot add happiness to this world; similarly, we cannot add pain to it either. The sum total of the energies of pleasure and pain displayed here on earth will be the same throughout. We just push it from this side to the other side, and from that side to this, but it will remain the same, because so to remain is its very nature. This ebb and flow, this rising and falling, is in the world's very nature; it would be as logical to hold otherwise as to say that we

may have life without death. This is complete nonsense, because the very idea of life implies constant death and the very idea of pleasure implies pain. The lamp is constantly burning out, and that is its life. If you want to have life you have to die every moment for it. Life and death are only different expressions for the same thing, looked at from different standpoints; they are the falling and the rising of the same wave, and the two form one whole. One looks at the "fall" side and becomes a pessimist, another looks at the "rise" side and becomes an optimist. When a boy is going to school and his father and mother are taking care of him, every thing seems blessed to him; his wants are simple, he is a great optimist. But the old man, with his varied experience, becomes calmer, and is sure to have his warmth considerably cooled down. So, old nations, with signs of decay all around them, are apt to be less hopeful than new nations. There is a proverb in India, "A thousand years a city, and a thousand years a forest." This change of city into forest and *vice versa* is going on everywhere, and it makes peoples optimists

or pessimists according to the side they see of it.

The next idea we take up is the idea of equality. These millennium ideas have been great motive powers to work. Many religions preach this as an element in them,—that God is coming to rule the universe, and that then there will be no difference at all in conditions. The people who preach this doctrine are mere fanatics, and fanatics are indeed the sincerest of mankind. Christianity was preached just on the basis of the fascination of this fanaticism, and that is what made it so attractive to the Greek and the Roman slaves. They believed that, under the millennial religion, there would be no more slavery, that there would be plenty to eat and drink; and therefore they flocked round the Christian standard. Those who preached the idea first were of course ignorant fanatics, but very sincere. In modern times this millennial aspiration takes the form of equality—of liberty, equality and fraternity. This is also fanaticism. True equality has never been and never can be on earth. How can we all be equal here? That impossible kind of equality implies total

death. What makes this world what it is? Lost balance. In the primal state, which is called chaos, there is perfect balance. How do all the formative forces of the universe come then? By struggling, competition, conflict. Suppose that all the particles of matter were held in equilibrium, would there be then any process of creation? We know from science that it is impossible. Disturb a sheet of water, and there you find every particle of the water trying to become calm again, one rushing against the other; and in this same way all the phenomena which we call the universe—all things therein—are struggling to get back to the state of parfect balance. Again a disturbance comes, and again we have combination and creation. Inequality is the very basis of creation. At the same time the forces struggling to obtain equality are as much a necessity of creation as those which destroy it.

Absolute equality, that which means a perfect balance of all the struggling forces in all the planes, can never be in this world. Before you attain that state, the world will have become quite unfit for any kind of life,

and no one will be there. We find, therefore, that all these ideas of the millennium and of absolute equality are not only impossible, but also that, if we try to carry them out, they will lead us surely enough to the day of destruction. What makes the difference between man and man? It is largely the difference in the brain. Nowadays no one but a lunatic will say that we are all born with the same brain power. We come into the world with unequal endowments; we come as greater men or as lesser men, and there is no getting away from that pre-natally determined condition. The American Indians were in this country for thousands of years, and a few handfuls of your ancestors came to their land. What difference have they caused in the appearance of the country? Why did not the Indians make improvements and build cities, if all are equal? With your ancestors a different sort of brain power came into the land, different bundles of past impressions came, and they worked out and manifested themselves. Absolute non-differentiation is death. So long as this world lasts, differentiation there will and must be, and the millennium

of perfect equality will come only when a cycle of creation comes to its end. Before that equality cannot be. Yet this idea of realising the millennium is a great motive power. Just as inequality is necessary for creation itself, so the struggle to limit it is also necessary. If there were no struggle to become free and get back to God, there would be no creation either. It is the difference between these two forces that determines the nature of the motives of men. There will always be these motives to work, some tending towards bondage and others towards freedom.

This word's wheel within wheel is terrible mechanism; if we put our hands in it, as soon as we are caught we are gone. We all think that when we have done a certain duty, we shall be at rest; but before we have done a part of that duty, another is already in waiting. We are all being dragged along by this mighty, complex, world-machine. There are only two ways out of it; one is to give up all concern with the machine, to let it go and stand aside; to give up our desires. That is very easy to say, but is almost impossible to do. I

do not know whether in twenty millions of men one can do that. The other way is to plunge into the world and learn the secret of work, and that is the way of *Karma-Yoga.* Do not fly away from the wheels of the world-machine, but stand inside it and learn the secret of work. Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.

We have now seen what work is. It is a part of nature's foundation, and goes on always. Those that believe in God understand this better, because they know that God is not such an incapable being as will need our help. Although this universe will go on always, our goal is freedom; our goal is unselfishness; and according to *Karma-Yoga* that goal is to be reached through work. All ideas of making the world perfectly happy may be good as motive powers for fanatics; but we must know that fanaticism brings forth as much evil as good. The *Karma-Yogin* asks why you require any motive to work other than the inborn love of freedom. Be beyond the common wordly motives. "To work you have the right,

but not to the fruits thereof." Man can train himself to know and to practise that, says the *Karma-Yogin*. When the idea of doing good becomes a part of his very being, then he will not seek for any motive outside. Let us do good, because it is good to do good; he who d es good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down, says the *Karma-Yogin*. Any work that is done with any the least selfish motive, instead of making us free, forges one more chain for our feet.

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them. Know that this world is not we, nor are we this world; that we are really not the body; that we really do not work. We are the Self, eternally at rest and at peace. Why should we be bound by anything? We must not weep; there is no weeping for the Soul. We must not even weep for sympathy. Only we like that sort of thing, and, in our imagination, think that God is weeping in that way on His throne. Such a God would not be worth attaining. Why should God weep at all? To weep is a sign of weakness, of bondage. It is very good

to say that we should be perfectly non-attached, but what is the way to do it? Every good work we do without any ulterior motive, instead of forging a new chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in a chain, and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals. Yet all this may seem to be rather quixotic and too philosophical, more theoretical than practical. I have read many arguments against the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and many have said that without motives you cannot work. They have never seen unselfish work except under the influence of fanaticism, and therefore, they speak in that way.

Let me tell you in conclusion a few words about one man who actually carried this teaching of *Karma-Yoga* into practice. That man is Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. All the prophets of the world, except Buddha, had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be

divided into two sets, one set holding that they are incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are only messengers from God; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who has said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." He was, in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives; and what man worked more than he? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character; such high philosophy; such wide sympathy; this great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals, and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal *Karma-Yogin*, acting entirely without motive, and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man

ever born; beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and brain that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has ever been manifested. He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from your childhood; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then, if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it." He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of *Karma-Yoga*.